



(Timbs)

22

Things not generally Known.

POPULAR ERRORS

Explained and Illustrated.

A BOOK FOR OLD AND YOUNG.

By JOHN TIMBS, F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF CURIOSITIES OF LONDON, THINGS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN,
CURIOSITIES OF HISTORY, ETC.



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GENTLE READER,

Few of the plans which have of late years been devised for the spread of knowledge, have specifically aimed at the object of the present volume of "THINGS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN": "to take us from the track of our nursery mistakes, and, by showing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments."

Expositions of Error, or works exclusively devoted to that purpose, are not so rare in olden as in modern literature. About two hundred years since, SIR THOMAS BROWNE, a man of extensive learning and research, published his volume of *Inquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*, which enjoys high reputation to the present day. This work may be said to have first suggested the "POPULAR ERRORS;" though, while I have been stimulated by the zeal of BROWNE, I have not followed his disinclination to admit new positions, or his elaborate study of rare books, or his fondness for the embellishments of classic story and quotation, such as might be expected from a physician of the seventeenth century. To Errors long since exploded I have been content to refer as the *antiquities*, or "curiosities," of the subject, since my object has been to explain the Errors of the present day; even to catch them living as they rise. Moreover, I have striven to make the expositions of practical utility in the business of every-day life. I do not, however, profess to instruct the reader how "to tell the clock by algebra," nor to "drink tea by stratagem:" the aim in the present volume is rather to be accurate and agreeable by way of abstract and table anecdote, so as to become an advantageous and amusing guest at any intellectual fire-side.

By means of condensation—the result of thought—which rejects what no longer appears necessary, the reader is here presented with expositions of SEVERAL HUNDRED POPULAR ERRORS; presenting, it is hoped, as many agreeable accessions of novelty, and sources of rational curiosity and amusing research.

The present Edition has been in great part rewritten, so as to be in the main a new work. It now forms one of the series of volumes of "THINGS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN."

October 1858.

L. T.

The Frontispiece.

A REPUTED ENGLISH WITCH.

This Engraving is a facsimile of a rare print in the collection of the late Mr. Beckford, of Fonthill Abbey. It portrays a reputed English witch, one Elizabeth Sawyer, who was executed for witchcraft in the year 1621. This was some years before the time of Matthew Hopkins, the witch-finder. The reader will find a paper on the "Belief in Witchcraft," at p. 180; and a *précis* of the "Laws relating to Witchcraft," at p. 214.

THE DEATH-WATCH.

This is the timber-boring beetle, *Anobium tessellatum*, whose beatings, described at pp. 150, 151, and resembling the ticking of a watch, have been superstitiously believed to predict the death of some one of the family in the house wherein it is heard. In the engraving the insect is shown of its natural size, and its upper and under sides magnified.

The Vignette.

This illustrates the erroneous notion of the pelican feeding her young with blood from her breast; a fable which has been credulously repeated in books of the present day.

NOTE.

Page 75. THE SUN EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE.—The experiments of Dr. M'Keever have been repeated by Professor Le Conte, of the United States, who has found the rate of combustion to be sensibly the same in the dark and in the sunshine; yet it varies from day to day, according to the density of the air. For details, see *Wells's Annual of Scientific Discovery* for 1858, pp. 198-203.

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POPULAR ERRORS

EXPLAINED.



Economy of Man.

MAN NOT MADE FROM CLAY.

SILICA and alumina together constitute clay; and although this occurs in no plant or animal of any kind, all plants and animals, and especially man, are held to have been created from it, and to revert to it after death. Not merely the vulgar, but also the intelligent, have agreed in interpreting the sacred declaration, that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground," as signifying that man was made from clay. Theologians have often undesignedly contributed to the opinion, by mixing up with this simple declaration of a physical truth the purely metaphorical references of Scripture to "the earthly house of this tabernacle," and to mankind, under God's sovereignty, as resembling "clay in the hands of the potter." The doctrine, however, does not belong only to Christendom. In many regions of the East, Adam is held to have been a red man, and made of red clay; nay, a specimen of such loam, brought from a traditional site of the Garden of Eden near the Euphrates, was recently offered in Edinburgh for chemical analysis, to see if it could be identified as Adamic dust. 'Shakespeare long ago counted upon a universal response, when he made Hamlet too curiously consider how

"Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

And our latest and greatest poetess, in her *Aurora Leigh*, makes her hero Romney exclaim,

"Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all;
And though men push and poke and paddle in't
(As children play at fashioning dirt-pies),
And call their fancies by the name of facts,
Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,
When all's plain dirt,—they come back to it at last;
The first grave-digger proves it with a spade,
And pats all even."

The belief is a very natural one ; for no dust is more abundant than clay-dust ; and plants live with their roots buried in clay ; and on plants, all animals, including man, feed directly or indirectly. Yet the belief is without any foundation. Dust we are, and unto dust we shall return, not into clay.—*Edinburgh Essays*, 1856.

THAT A MAN HATH ONE RIB LESS THAN A WOMAN.

This is “a common conceit, derived from the history of Genesis, wherein it stands delivered, that Eve was framed out of a rib of Adam ; whence it is concluded the sex of men still wants that rib our father lost in Eve. . . . But this will not consist with reason or inspection ; for if we survey the skeleton of both sexes, and therein the compass of bones, we shall readily discover that *men and women* have four-and-twenty ribs. . . . And again, though we concede that there wanted one rib in the skeleton of Adam, yet were it repugnant unto reason and common observation that his posterity should want the same ; for we observe that mutilations are not transmitted from father to son.”—*Sir Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors*, b. vii. chap. 7.

“BODIES FLOAT AS SOON AS THE GALL BREAKS.”

The cause of a body rising in the water is not from the breaking of the gall, but in consequence of the body becoming lighter than water from the generation of gas, as putrefaction proceeds. A body will, therefore, float sooner in warm than in cold weather.

POSITION OF THE HEART.

The Heart is said to be on the left side. This, strictly speaking, is not true. It is, as nearly as possible, in the middle of the chest ; and if a line were drawn down the centre of the breast-bone, to divide the heart into two portions, we should find rather the largest on the right side. The *point* is directed toward the left side, close to the fifth rib ; and the reason we attribute its position to the left side rather than the right is this : that we can more readily feel the pulsation on this side than we can on the other, because the last of the four great cavities of the Heart—namely, the left ventricle—is placed on the left side. From this the blood is forced over the whole system, and we readily feel its pumping action through the ribs.

THE PULSE.

The value of the indications of the Pulse is often forfeited by the slight and careless manner in which they are taken. An inference may be formed at one moment, or under one

posture, which the lapse of five minutes, and change of position, will altogether belie. It is true that this is less the case in fevers and inflammatory diseases; but there are many others where the view of the disorder and method of treatment may be wholly perverted by trusting to a single observation. All recent inquiry into the Pulse shows the need of attention to these points.

It is almost unnecessary to state, that by the Pulse is meant the beat of an artery; and that the one commonly chosen for examination is the radial artery, which beats at the wrist. The first point generally attended to is the number of the beats; and since in this, as in all other medical questions, it is necessary to be acquainted with the state of health in order to recognise any deviation from it, we must mention the ordinary frequency of the Pulse at different ages. In the new-born infant, it is from 130 to 140 in a minute, but decreases in frequency as life advances; so that, in a middle-aged adult in perfect health, it is from 72 to 75. In the decline of life, it is slower than this, and falls to about 60. It is obvious, that if we could suppose a practitioner ignorant of these plain facts, he would be liable to make the most absurd blunders, and might imagine a boy of ten to be labouring under some grievous disease because his pulse had not the slow sobriety of his grandfather's. A more likely error is, to mistake the influence of some temporary cause for the effect of a more permanent disease: thus, in a nervous patient, the doctor's knock at the door will quicken the pulse some 15 or 20 beats in a minute. This fact did not escape the notice of the sagacious Celsus, who says: "The pulse will be altered by the approach of the physician, and the anxiety of the patient doubting what his opinion of the case may be. For this reason, a skilful physician will not feel the pulse as soon as he comes; but he will first sit down with a cheerful countenance, and ask how the patient is; soothing him, if he be timorous, by the kindness of his conversation, and afterwards applying his hand to the patient's arm." *De Medicâ*, lib. iii. cap. 7.

Granting, however, that these sources of error are avoided, the quickness of the pulse will afford most important information. If in a person, for example, whose pulse is usually 72, the beats rise in number to 98, some alarming disease is certainly present; or, on the other hand, should it have permanently sunk to 50, it is but too probable that the source of circulation, the heart itself, is labouring under incurable disease, or that some other of the great springs of life is irremediably injured. Supposing, again, the pulse to be 72, each beat ought to occur at an interval of five-sixths of a second; but should any deviation from this rhythm be perceived, the pulse is then said to be irregular. The varieties of irregularity are infinite: but there is one so remarkable as to deserve particular mention. It will happen sometimes that the interval between two beats is so much longer than was expected, that it would seem that one beat had been omitted; in this case, the pulse is said to be an intermittent one.

THE BLACKNESS OF THE NEGRO.

That the heat of the sun produces blackness of the integuments is an opinion as old as the days of Pliny. Buffon asserts that "climate may be regarded as the chief cause of the different colours of man;" and Smith is of opinion that "from the

pole to the equator, we observe a gradation in the complexion nearly in proportion to the latitude of the country." Blumenbach, under the same impression, endeavours to account for this black tinge by a chemical illustration somewhat curious. He states that the proximate cause of the dark colour is an abundance of carbon secreted by the skin with hydrogen, precipitated and fixed by the contact of the atmospheric oxygen.

Dr. Draper, of New York, attributes the blackness to an excess of hæmatin, or iron, in the blood, which in a hot climate accumulates in the system, and gradually settles in the lower cells of the cuticle, which it bronzes from orange-tawny down to negro-black. This, however, is but another "supposed operation of climate, which," remarks Dr. Millingen, "the observation of every unprejudiced traveller can impugn."

Sir Thomas Browne devotes three entire chapters to "The Blackness of Negroes," and confesses that he finds "no less of darkness in the cause than in the effect itself;" adding, that the generally received causes are "the heat and scorch of the sun, or the curse of God on Cham and his posterity." Aristobulus refers the blackness to "the inward use of certain waters." Next, Browne asks whether it may not have proceeded from the same means as "artificial negroes or gypsies acquire their complexion, by anointing their bodies with bacon and fat substances, and so exposing them to the sun."

Wilkin, in his notes to Browne's work, says: "We know the proximate cause of the different complexions existing among the blacker and tawny varieties of the human race to be different kinds of the colouring matter contained in the *rete mucosum*; but as to the originating cause, we can scarcely arrive at even a probable conjecture. There have existed various opinions as to the original complexion of mankind. Not only have the Negroes deemed themselves the 'fairer,' describing Satan and all terrible objects as being white; but they have contended that our first progenitor was, like themselves, black." Mr. Payne Knight, in his work *On Taste*, is of the same opinion, that Adam in Paradise was an African black. Dr. Pritchard has also endeavoured to show that all men were originally Negroes. Blumenbach, on the other hand, supposes the original to have been Caucasian. Count Romford asserts, that if he were called upon to live in a very warm climate, he would blacken his skin, or wear a black shirt; and Sir Everard Home, from direct experiment on himself and on a Negro's skin, lays it down as evident, "that the power of the sun's rays to scorch the skin of animals is destroyed when applied to a dark surface, although the absolute heat, in consequence of the absorption of the rays, is greater." And Dr. Stark (*Phil. Trans.* for 1833) shows, as the result of the experiments detailed, "that if a black surface absorbs caloric in greatest quantity, it also gives it out in the same proportion, and thus a circulation of heat is, as it were, established, calculated to promote the insensible perspiration, and to keep the body cool. This view is confirmed by the observed fact of the stronger odour exhaled by the bodies of black people."

INSENSIBILITY OF THE BRAIN.

Sensibility is, in reality, very different from what is suggested by first experience. Thus, the brain is insensible: that

part of the brain which, if disturbed or diseased, takes away consciousness, is as insensible as the leather of our shoe ! That the brain may be touched, or a portion of it cut off, without interrupting the patient in the sentence he is uttering, is a surprising circumstance ! From this fact physiologists formerly inferred that the surgeon had not reached the more important organ of the brain. But that opinion arose from the notion prevailing that a nerve must necessarily be sensible. Whereas, when we consider that the different parts of the nervous system have totally distinct endowments, and that there are nerves insensible to touch and incapable of giving pain, though exquisitely alive to their proper office, we have no just reason to conclude that the brain should be sensible, or exhibit a property of the nerve of the skin. Reason on it as we may, the fact is so :—the brain, through which every impression must be conveyed before it is perceived, is itself insensible. This informs us that sensibility is not a necessary attendant on the delicate texture of a living part, but that it must have an appropriate organ, and that it is an especial provision.—*Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise.*

SKIN-DEEP WOUNDS.

The extreme sensibility of the skin to the slightest injury conveys to every one the notion that the pain must be the more severe the deeper the wound. This is not the fact ; nor would it accord with the beneficent design which shines out every where. The sensibility of the skin serves not only to give the sense of touch, but it is a guard upon the deeper parts ; and as they cannot be reached except through the skin, and we must suffer pain therefore before they are injured, it would be superfluous to bestow sensibility upon these deeper parts. If the internal parts which act in the motions of the body had possessed a similar degree and kind of sensibility with the skin, so far from serving any useful purpose, this sensibility would have been a source of inconvenience and continual pain in the common exercise of the frame. The fact of the exquisite sensibility of the surface, in comparison with the deeper parts, being thus ascertained by daily experience, we cannot mistake the intention, that the skin is made a safeguard to the delicate textures which are contained therein, by forcing us to avoid injuries : and it does afford us a more effectual defence than if our bodies were covered with the hide of the rhinoceros.—*Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise.*

SEEING WITH THE FINGERS.

The credulity of the public has sometimes been imposed

upon by persons who pretended to See by means of their Fingers: thus, at Liverpool, the notorious Miss M'Avoy contrived for a long time to persuade a great number of persons that she really possessed this miraculous power. Equally unworthy of credit are all the stories of persons, under the influence of animal magnetism, hearing sounds addressed to the pit of the stomach, and reading the pages of a book applied to the skin over that organ.

These Errors have, doubtless, gained credence from a belief that the functions of the nerves are interchangeable, as is the case with many other functions in the animal system. On the contrary, the function of each nerve of sense is determinate, and can be executed by no other part of the nervous system. No nerve but the optic nerve, and no part of that nerve except the retina, is capable, however impressed, of giving rise to the sensation of light—that is, *seeing*: no part of the nervous system but the auditory nerve can convey that of sound or *hearing*; and so of the rest.—*Dr. Roget's Bridgewater Treatise.*

CHOICE OF SPECTACLES.

Among the many vulgar Errors that are daily injuring those who cherish them, few have done more injury to the eyes than the notion that all persons of the same age require glasses of the same focus. Nothing can be more absurd. As well might the same remedies be applied indiscriminately to all diseases, provided the age of the sufferer were the same.

Sir David Brewster has well observed, that “the selection of glasses for imperfect vision is a point of much deeper importance than is generally believed. An oculist who is acquainted only with the diseases of the human eye, without possessing any knowledge of it as an optical instrument, is often led professionally to recommend glasses when they ought not to be used, and to fix on focal lengths entirely unfit for the purpose to which they are applied; and the mere vender of lenses and spectacles is still more frequently in the habit of proffering his deleterious counsel.”

When spectacles are properly selected, they afford the greatest aid and comfort to short or long-sighted persons, and may be worn for several years without diminishing the sight, though the contrary is vulgarly imagined.

CAUSES OF LEFT-HANDEDNESS.

The question has been much discussed among anatomists, whether the properties of the right hand, in comparison with those of the left, depend on the course of the arteries to it. It is affirmed that the trunk of the artery going to the right arm

passes off from the heart, so as to admit the blood directly and more forcibly into the small vessels of the arm. This is assigning a cause which is unequal to the effect, and presenting altogether too confined a view of the subject : it is a participation in the common error of seeking in the mechanism the cause of phenomena which have a deeper source.

For the conveniences of life, and to make us prompt and dexterous, it is pretty evident that there ought to be no hesitation which hand is to be used, or which foot is to be put forward ; nor is there, in fact, any such indecision. Is this taught, or have we this readiness given to us by nature ? It must be observed, at the same time, that there is a distinction in the whole right side of the body, and that the left side is not only the weaker, in regard to muscular strength, but also in its vital or constitutional properties. The development of the organs of action and motion is greatest upon the right side, as may at any time be ascertained by measurement, or the testimony of the tailor or shoemaker ; certainly, this superiority may be said to result from the more frequent exertion of the right hand ; but the peculiarity extends to the constitution also, and disease attacks the left extremities more frequently than the right. In opera-dancers, we may see that the most difficult feats are performed by the right foot. But their preparatory exercises better evince the natural weakness of the left limb, since these performers are made to give double practice to this limb, in order to avoid awkwardness in the public exhibition ; for if these exercises be neglected, an ungraceful performance will be given to the right side. In walking behind a person, it is very seldom that we see an equalised motion of the body ; and if we look to the left foot, we shall find that the tread is not so firm upon it, that the toe is not so much turned out as in the right, and that a greater push is made with it. From the peculiar form of woman, and the elasticity of her step resulting more from the motion of the ankle than of the haunches, the defect of the left foot, when it exists, is more apparent in her gait. No boy hops upon his left foot unless he be left-handed. The horseman puts his left foot in the stirrup, and springs from the right.

We think we may conclude that every thing being adapted, in the conveniences of life, to the right hand—as, for example, the direction of the worm of the screw, or of the cutting end of the auger—is not arbitrary, but is related to a natural endowment of the body. He who is left-handed is most sensible to the advantages of this adaptation, from the opening of a parlour-door to the opening of a pen-knife. On the whole, the preference of the right hand is not the effect of habit, but is a natural provision, and is bestowed for a very obvious purpose ; and the

property does not depend on the peculiar distribution of the arteries of the arm, but the preference is given to the right foot as well as to the right hand.—*Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise.*

THAT A MAN WEIGHS MORE BEFORE DINNER THAN AFTER.

This ridiculous Error is easily disproved ; but much reasoning has been wasted on the subject, the reasoners forgetting, or not being acquainted with a story told of James the Sixth of Scotland. It seems that, in his time, it was the general belief that a pail of water weighed less with a goose in it than it did without the bird. Much discussion had arisen in the presence of James as to the cause of this singular result ; but the philosophers could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. At length, the wary monarch asked them whether it would not be as well to ascertain whether the fact was true before they argued on the matter. They took his advice, and discovered their error.

Sir Thomas Browne notes on this Error :

“Many are of opinion, and some learned men maintain, that men are lighter after meals than before, and that by a supply and addition of spirits obscuring the gross ponderosity of the aliment injected ; but the contrary hereof we have found in the trial of sundry persons in different ages and sexes. And we conceive men may mistake if they distinguish not the sense of levity unto themselves, and in regard of the scale or decision of brutination. For, after a draught of wine, a man may seem lighter in himself from sudden refection, although he be heavier in the balance, from a corporal and ponderous addition ; but a man in the morning is lighter in the scale, because in sleep some pounds have perspired ; and is also lighter unto himself, because he is refected.”

A man is, however, taller on his rising in the morning than at night ; for the cartilages between the vertebræ of the backbone, twenty-four in number, yield considerably to the pressure of the body in an erect position in the day, and expand themselves during the repose of the night.

EXPOSURE TO THE SUN.

There are few points which seem less generally understood, or more clearly proved, than the fact, that Exposure to the Sun, without exercise sufficient to create free perspiration, will produce illness ; and that the (same) exposure to the sun, with sufficient exercise, *will not* produce illness. Let any man sleep in the sun, he will awake perspiring and very ill ; perhaps he will die. Let the same man dig in the sun for the same length of time, and he will perspire ten times as much, and be quite well. The fact is, that not only the direct rays of the sun, but the heat of the atmosphere produce abundance of bile, and powerful exercise alone will carry off that bile.—*Napier's Cephalonia.*

TEMPERATURE OF MAN.

To the uneducated it appears no less erroneous to say, that the body is equally warm on a cold winter morning as on the most sultry of the dog-days, than to affirm that the sun is stationary, contrary to the apparent evidence of the senses; yet the one is as well ascertained as the other. For example, at Ceylon, Dr. Davy found that the temperature of the native inhabitants differed only about one or two degrees from the ordinary standard in England.—*James Rennie*.

TEMPERATURE OF AGED PERSONS.

Aged persons are generally thought to be more susceptible of cold than the young. The heat of human beings has, however, been proved to be very nearly the same, whatever may be their age, their temperature, their type, or the race to which they belong; and whatever may be the nature of their food; as the comparative researches of Dr. Davy prove, from the priests of Buddha, the Hindoos, eaters of rice, and the Vedas, who live entirely on animal food.

LONGEVITY OF AUTHORS.

Bishop Huet observes, that it is an unfounded prejudice to imagine that the pursuit of literature is injurious to health. Studious men are as long-lived in general as others. The *literati* of the French *Ana* were long-lived: two-thirds of them passed the age of 76; and as many of them attained the age of 90 as died under 60. Thus, St. Evremond passed the age of 90; Chevreau, that of 88; Valesius, 85; Longarue, 82; Poggio, 79; and Duchat and Ségrais, 77; Furetière died at 68, and Cardinal Perron at 62. Archbishop Sancroft died at 77, Bishop Gibson at 79; Newton, Waller, and Clement XII. passed the period of 80; and Bishop Hough, Dr. Tancred Robinson, Cardinal Fleury, Sir John Maynard, and Sir Christopher Wren, exceeded the age of 90. Bishop Huet himself was a remarkable instance of health and longevity in a very studious man. Though his studies directed him to the church, he did not enter into holy orders till he was 46 years of age. He was Bishop of Avranches 14 years; and having spent the remaining twenty years of his life in devotion and study, he died in his 91st year.

The following average of ages is interesting:—

Ariosto, 59 years; Bede, 63; Boccaccio, 62; Chaucer, 72; Dante, 56; Guicciardini, 58; Leo X., 46; Leonardo da Vinci, 75; Luther, 63; Machiavelli, 61; Mahomet, 61; Melancthon, 63; Milton, 66; Michael Angelo, 90; Petrarch, 70; Raphael,

37 ; Shakspeare, 53 ; Spenser, 86 ; Tasso, 51 ; Wycliffe, 60 : average age of the whole, 62½ years.

HIGHLAND LONGEVITY.

It has often been said that examples of extreme Longevity are common in the Highlands of Scotland, and the tale has been repeated till it has almost become an axiom dangerous to doubt. A well-known and remarkable instance is often quoted from Pennant ; but it is probably a solitary one, since other inquirers have not found similar cases, and no satisfactory evidence has been adduced to justify the general assertion. The tourist who hurries through the country may, perhaps, adopt this notion from the number of old people whom he sees in the cottages, or engaged in some sort of labour when nearly past the power of labouring. But it must be recollected that the aged and infirm continue to reside with their children when no longer able to maintain themselves ; and that there is no asylum, like the workhouse or hospital of England, where these objects are concealed from the public view, and almost lost to the public recollection. Hence the aged are seen every where ; and hence the easy but superficial conclusion, that they are in greater proportion here than in England.—*Dr. M'Culloch's Western Islands of Scotland.*

Dr. Webster, of the Scottish Hospital, London, in a work on Scottish longevity, says : “ The longevity of the Aberdonians is not an event of the present period. A soldier named Alexander M'Culloch, who served under Cromwell and in the three following reigns, died near the city in 1757, at the age of 132 years. Donald Cameron, of Kinnichlaber, in Rannach, who married when 100, died in 1759, aged 130 years. Another person of the same clan, viz. Archibald Cameron, a piper to seven Lords of the Isles, during the long period of 94 years, died at Keith in 1791, aged 122 years. A woman named Catherine Brébner died near Aberdeen in 1762, at the age of 124 ; while another female, named Mary Cameron, but whether any relation of the two Camerons above reported does not appear, died at Braemar in 1784, aged 129 years.”

DR. JENNER'S DISCOVERY OF VACCINATION.

It is stated, that the suffering Dr. Jenner underwent in youth from the mal-administration of the small-pox originated in his mind the desire of exterminating the disease, or, at least, of alleviating its concomitant miseries. When in his forty-eighth year, Jenner made a long inquiry into the disease termed cow-pox, which is a common complaint in cows in Gloucestershire (where he resided) ; and which, to those who receive it from the cows in milking, appeared, from long-existing tradition, to confer complete security from small-pox, either natural or inoculated. To test this, Dr. Jenner, in 1797, inoculated some young persons with matter taken from the disease in cows ;

and the result proving the power of cow-pox inoculation to protect the human body from small-pox contagion, Dr. Jenner brought this inestimable fact before the public in 1798.

INOCULATION FOR THE SMALL-POX.

It is not at all an uncommon thing for even well-informed persons to consider one event the cause of another, because the one has immediately preceded the other in the order of time. A curious instance of this error occurred in the last century. The fish, on which many of the inhabitants of Norway depended for subsistence, suddenly disappeared from their coasts: the practice of inoculation for the small-pox had just then been introduced, and was instantly fixed upon as the cause of the calamity; and as the people considered the risk of that disorder a trifle in comparison with starvation, nothing could exceed their righteous indignation against all who undertook to prevent their taking the small-pox.

SMALL-POX AND VACCINATION.

The Vaccine-Board Report for 1857 adduces statistics to disprove a popular but very erroneous notion, that Small-pox is tending towards extinction, which is calculated to lead to the neglect of Vaccination. It has been demonstrated, on the contrary, that this loathsome disease is as virulent as ever; that is, the mortality in those who take small-pox "naturally," or without being vaccinated, is quite as great as ever it was. The mortality in this class is one-third of those attacked, or 35 per cent; under 5 years of age it is 50 per cent; and under 2 years, much greater. It is least between 10 and 15 years, and after 20 years of age it rises rapidly, and at 30 exceeds the mortality of infancy. After 60 years of age, there is hardly any escape. This last fact is worthy of notice as refuting another vulgar error, viz. that in later periods of life infectious diseases are not so easily taken. This is only partially the case. There are instances of small-pox after 60, and sexagenarian patients almost invariably succumb. Vaccination properly performed, the Board declare, once more, to be all but complete protection from one of the direst scourges of suffering humanity.

RIDICULE OF HYPOCHONDRIACS.

There is a common notion that certain invalids can be laughed out of their complaints; than which few ideas are more erroneous. Thus, to ridicule the complaints of the hypochondriac is very inconsiderate; for as the physician is often obliged to humour the patient, and to prescribe what is termed a *placebo*, so relations and others should, when the patient appears, from

increased irritation, to require soothing, listen to a string of complaints which they know to be in a great measure exaggerated, rather than, by totally disregarding and ridiculing them, add to the irritation of the mind of the individual, who, notwithstanding his fancies, is actually in a state of disease.

THE TERM "NERVOUS."

There are few terms more commonly used, both in and out of the medical profession, than "nervous." It is a word which has acquired great numbers of significations, and many people, at the same time, profess not to understand what it means. Certainly, to speak of "being nervous" is a mode of expression which is very indefinite, from the use that is made of it; but which, if properly applied, carries to the mind a very forcible impression of a peculiar state, for which we have no very appropriate language. Unfortunately, the same word has been long employed to express two states in direct opposition to each other: thus, we talk of strong weighty argument, delivered with boldness and energy, and in appropriate language, as "a nervous speech," and the orator as "full of nerve;" whilst we, on the other hand, say that the individual who delivers himself with timidity, with hesitation, and distrust of his own power, is "highly nervous;" we regret that his "good sense was overpowered by his nerves." In the first instance, we mean to say that there is a tension and strength of nerve; in the latter, that there is a laxity and weakness of nerve: yet, by some strange anomaly in our mode of expressing our ideas, we apply the same adjective to both these states of the nervous system.—*Dr. Sigmond's Lectures.*

MEDICAL BOOKS.

A book which directs persons how to physic themselves ought to be entitled, *Every Man his own Poisoner*, because it cannot possibly teach them how to discriminate between the resemblant symptoms of different diseases.

A work once famous, *Buchan's Domestic Medicine*, was written in Sheffield; and in the memoirs of James Montgomery, of Sheffield, occurs the following conversation on the author: "I remember seeing the old gentleman when I first went to London. He was of venerable aspect, neat in his dress, his hair tied behind with a large black ribbon, and a gold-headed cane in his hand, quite realising my idea of an Esculapian dignitary. *Everett*—'Did you ever speak to him?' *Montgomery*—'No; he was quite out of my reach; but I looked upon him with respect as a man who had published a book.' *Waterhouse*—'Buchan's book has had its day; and whatever may have been its merits, it has produced some mischievous effects. In one of the Scottish editions, there was an astounding misprint, in which a prescription, containing *one hundred ounces of laudanum*, instead of that number of *drops*, is recommended.' "

PROFITS OF MEDICAL ADVISERS.

It is a strange Error to consider the Profits of Medical Attendants to be uncommonly extravagant; because this great apparent profit is frequently no more than the wages of labour. The skill of an apothecary is a much nicer and more delicate matter than of any artifice whatever; and the trust which is reposed in him is of much greater importance. His reward, therefore, ought to be proportionate to his skill and his trust; and it arises generally, from the price at which he sells his drugs. But the whole drugs which the best employed apothecary in a large market-town will sell in a year may not, perhaps, cost him above thirty or forty pounds. Though he should sell them, therefore, for three or four hundred, or at a thousand per cent profit, this may often be no more than the reasonable wages of his labour, charged in the only way in which he can charge them—upon the price of his drugs.

For example, the apparent extravagance of the charge of eighteen-pence for a draught-phial of medicine is obvious to many who do not reflect that the charge is, in reality, for the payment of professional skill. The eighteen-pence may be fairly divided into two parts: four-pence for medicine and phial, and fourteen-pence for advice.

THE USE OF POWERFUL MEDICINES

Is deprecated by many who see in them only the virulence of their concentrated forms. What we have mainly to regard in estimating the medicinal value of any substance, or its just application to practice, is the well-defined nature of its action on some organ or function of the living economy. If this action be clearly ascertained, we have essentially a medicinal power in our hands. Every such agent, even the most simple, is capable of being misused by excess; and this excess, or the fitness of its use, is determined, not by any comparison of the power of different agents, but simply by the amount of the effects appropriate to each. The prussic acid, diluted as befits the peculiar application given to it, is not, in any practical sense, a stronger medicine than others most familiar to us, nor more dangerous in its use; and we have even some additional security in the more definite nature of its effects, and in the greater care bestowed on its administration.—*Sir Henry Holland's Medical Notes.*

BITTERS AND TONICS.

Bitters and Tonics are often confounded; whereas there is a great difference between them. "When weakness proceeds from excess of irritability, there bitters act beneficially; because

all bitters are poisons, and operate by stilling, and depressing, and lethargising the irritability. But where weakness proceeds from the opposite course of relaxation, there tonics are good ; because they brace up and tighten the loosened string. Bracing is a correct metaphor. Bark goes near to be a combination of a bitter and a tonic ; but no perfect medical combination of the two properties is yet known."—*Coleridge*.

"THE SCOTCH."

Popular notions in general are apt long to survive any basis of fact which they originally had. There is a disagreeable disease, supposed by the lower orders in England to be particularly prevalent in Scotland. What prevalence it may have had years ago, we cannot tell ; but it is a curious fact, that though we have spent all the years of our life in Scotland, we never once saw a person known to be afflicted with that disease ! (*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*). This reminds one of the following passage in Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson* :—"Boswell—'Pray, sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch ?' Johnson—'I cannot, sir.'"

HYDROPHOBIA.

It is an Error to imagine that a mad dog avoids the water ; for he will both drink it and swim in it as usual, and without presenting any of that horror of water which characterises Hydrophobia in man.

"GOOD FOR MAN AND BEAST."

"When the wind is in the east,
It's neither good for man nor beast,"

Is a common saying ; whence uninformed persons conclude, that if what is bad for man is bad for beast, so what is good for beast is good for man. A poor small farmer seeing a quantity of turpentine administered to his cow, fancied soon afterwards that it would cure him ; and not being particular in the quantity, he took half-a-pint, which killed him.

SALUBRITY OF THE SEA-COAST.

Trees, plants, &c. rarely flourish in the vicinity of the sea ; but the cause of their decline is little understood. It is attributed to the atmosphere containing a portion of the muriates, or salts of the sea over which it has passed, and which is pernicious to vegetable life. But these properties are favourable to animal life ; and it has even been maintained, that the air best adapted to vegetation is unpropitious to animal life, and *vice versa*. It may, however, be doubted, if nature has fixed any general rule ; since daily experience proves that different spe-

cies of animals—even different races of the same species—are variously affected by the same air. On this account, the salubrity of the sea-air is by no means universal, as it is commonly thought to be.

HOURS OF REST.

The mind requires regular rest as well as the body, and does not so soon recover from any excess of exertion. But it is the tendency of the present state of society in England to produce unnatural exertions. Stage-coach horses,* and walkers against time, are not the only creatures that are worked to death in this country. Many are the labourers (and it is the most sober and industrious upon whom the evil falls) who, by task-work, or by working what are called days and quarters, prepare for themselves a premature old age: and many are the youths who, while they are studying for University honours, rise early and sit up late, have recourse to art for the purpose of keeping their jaded faculties wakeful, and irretrievably injure their health for ever, if this intemperance of study does not cost them their lives.

Archbishop Williams is said to have slept only three hours in the four-and-twenty; “so that he lived three times as long,” says his biographer, “as one that lived no longer.” This is a marvellous fact; for Williams was a man who employed all his waking hours, and moreover was not of the most tranquil disposition. “But,” says Dr. Southey, “I believe that any one who should attempt to follow his example would severely suffer for his imprudence.”

SLEEPING WITH THE EYES OPEN.

There are some persons who sleep with their eyes open; and a man may stand before another man in such a situation, with a lighted candle in his hand, so that the image of that person who has the light may be vividly depicted on the retina of the sleeping man. But does he see? is he sensible of it? No. This has been magnified into a wonder; whereas it only proves what Dr. Darwin long since asserted,—that sensation does not depend upon impressions made upon the nerves, but upon actions excited in them. Arouse the slumberer, awake him that sleepeth, bring but the natural excitement into his nerves and muscles, and he would exclaim, “God bless me! how came you here at this time of night?”—*Abernethy*.

PREVENTION OF SLEEP.

“Trying to get to sleep,” or great anxiety to bring on sleep,

* This was written by Southey many years since: it would be now more appropriate to say, omnibus and cab horses.

is more or less its preventive; the disengagement of the mind from any strong emotion, or urgent train of thought, being the most needful condition for attaining sleep. This anxiety or desire to sleep, as a mental disquiet, will only add to the corporeal disquiet which has produced it. The motions of the mind must be as quiescent as those of the body; and the will, instead of commanding or interfering, must tranquilly resign itself to the general intention. "The various artifices of thought and memory used for the purpose often fail from this cause. When they succeed, it depends either on the exhaustion being more complete, or the mind being rapidly carried from one object to another; a desultory state of this kind, without emotion, being apparently one of the conditions most favourable to the effect desired. The close dependence of sleep on the state of the alimentary canal makes it probable that evil is often incurred by giving purgatives habitually at bed-time. The custom is a common one, and not least so in dyspeptic cases. Yet, here especially, every thing ought to be avoided which by irritation can disturb the soundness of rest; a consequence, often inevitable, of the action on the membranes which aperient medicines produce. Advantage may be gained in such cases by changing the time of using these remedies, where they cannot be dispensed with altogether."—*Sir Henry Holland's Medical Notes.*

SOUND SLEEP.

"Sound sleep" is usually considered a healthy state of repose; but it is an observation of Dr. Wilson Philip, that "no sleep is healthy but that from which we are easily roused."

TRACES OF DREAMS.

Persons are frequently at a loss to account for the reception of certain impressions, which are commonly a source of erroneous judgment. Sir H. Holland observes: "There are few who have not occasionally felt certain vague and fleeting impressions of a past state of mind, of which the recollection cannot by any effort take a firm hold, or attach them to any distinct points of time or place; something which does not link itself to any part of life, yet is felt to belong to the identity of the being. These are not improbably the shades of former dreams; the consciousness, from some casual association, wandering back into that strange world of thoughts and feelings in which it has existed during some antecedent time of sleep, without memory of it at the moment, or in the interval since."—*Medical Notes.*

SLEEP-WALKING.

It is from remembering the action of a dream as long as the dream lasts, that somnambulists generally meet with no accident in ascending to perilous situations during their sleep. The surrounding localities are so correctly presented to the mind, that the person ascends with safety to the roofs of houses, or crosses torrents and bridges, which during the waking state he would be afraid to do; the passion of fear being destroyed by sleep. The perilous situations of somnambulists have formed the wonder and admiration of gazing multitudes; and the mind of the vulgar has been impressed with the importance of leaving the sleep-wanderer to his own guidance, where a mistake in his footing of the twentieth part of an inch would have plunged him into eternity.

It should also be recollected, that the somnambulist is limited in all he does, during this state, to the ideas which are furnished by the dream, under the impressions of which he acts. His mind, it should seem, and his organs of sense generally, are likewise limited to these impressions.—*Langston Parker.*

SLEEP OF AGED PERSONS.

The wakefulness common to old people is by no means so great an affliction as certain persons imagine it to be. "They use but little exertion, and hence require but little sleep; and the internal activity is upon a par with the external. A third part of the vessels, perhaps, that took a share in the general energy of the middle life is obliterated; and the wear and tear of those that remain are much less. The pulse beats feebly; the muscles of respiration are less forcibly distended; the stomach digests a smaller portion of food, for only a smaller portion is required; the intellect is less active, the corporeal senses less lively; and hence, though there is far more weakness than in earlier life, there is a less proportionate demand for exertion, and hence a far smaller necessity for sleep."—*Dr. Hooper.*

NIGHTSTUDIES.

Extraordinary wakefulness, enabling persons to study hard for days and nights without sleep, leads to a very erroneous idea of the harmlessness of this excess. Intense thought, or abstraction, has a powerful influence on the circulation; and this absence of sleep is obviously the result of excessive action of the brain, which, if not relieved, must soon run on to delirium. Extraordinary wakefulness is therefore the signal of nature for suspending such pursuits.

Dr. Alexander was often heard to say in substance as follows: "Clergymen, authors, teachers, and other men of reflective habits, lose much

health by losing sleep, and this because they carry their trains of thought to bed with them. In my earlier years I greatly injured myself by studying my sermons in bed. The best thing one can do, is to take care of the *last half-hour before retiring*. Devotion being ended, something may be done to quiet the strings of the harp, which otherwise would go on to vibrate. Let me commend to you this maxim, which I somewhere learnt from Dr. Watts, who says that in his boyhood he received it from the lips of Dr. John Owen, a very good pedigree for a maxim—*Break the chain of thoughts at bed-time by something at once serious and agreeable*. By all means break the continuity, or sleep will be vexed, even if not driven away. If you wish to know my method, it is to turn over the pages of my English Bible, alighting on a passage here, a passage there, backward and forward without plan, and without allowing my mind to fasten on any, leaving any place the moment it ceases to interest me. Some tranquillising word often becomes a Divine message of peace : “He giveth His beloved sleep.”

LUNATICS.

Of the influence of the planets and the moon—notwithstanding the name of Lunatics, and the vulgar impressions—no proof whatever exists. Yet physicians of eminence—Mead even—have said, “the ravings of mad people kept lunar periods, accompanied by epileptic fits.” The moon apparently is equally innocent of the thousand things ascribed to her. When the paroxysms of mad people do occur at the full of the moon, Dr. Burrowes inclines to explain the matter thus : “Maniacs are in general light sleepers ; therefore, like the dog which bays the moon, and many other animals, remarked as being always uneasy when it is at the full, they are disturbed by the flitting shadows of clouds which are reflected on the earth and surrounding objects. Thus the lunatic converts shadows into images of terror, and equally with all ‘whom reason lights not,’ is filled with alarm, and becomes distressed and noisy.”

WHAT IS MADNESS ?

Physicians and medical writers of every age seek earnestly for some formal definition of Madness ;—a vain and unprofitable research ! “Its shapes and aspects are as various as those of the human mind in a sound state, and as little to be defined by any single phrases, however laboriously devised. Where such definitions are attempted, especially in courts of law, they fitly become matter of ridicule, or causes of contradiction and perplexity. Mental derangement, however the name be used, is not one thing, nor can it be treated as such. It differs in kind not less than in degree, and in each of its varieties we may trace through different causes all the gradations between a sound and unsound understanding, on the points where reason is thus disordered.” Sir Henry Holland considers “one of the most assured practical tests of insanity, particularly in cases of difficult legal discrimination, to be the sudden change of habi-

tual judgments, feelings, or actions, without obvious cause." There are, however, instances in which this criterion cannot be admitted alone; but "it is manifestly more secure in general than the appeal to an imaginary common standard of reason, which scarcely two persons would describe alike."—*Medical Notes.*

"Enough to drive one mad," is a common expression applied to the cares and crosses of this world, and may lead many persons to imagine that grief is oftener than joy the cause of madness. Yet actual hopes or disappointments in pecuniary speculations do not appear, according to Dr. Burrowes, to occasion insanity so frequently as unexpected or immense wealth, and consequent joy. In the six months preceding the numerous failures (or the panic) of 1825-6, there were fewer returns to the commissioners for licensing madhouses of insane persons in the London district than in any corresponding period for many years before.

In madness the memory is more impaired than is generally suspected. Lunatics recognise readily; but that appears to be the *only part* of their memory unimpaired.

"RELIGIOUS MADNESS."

Among the moral causes of intellectual derangement, Religion has been enumerated, mainly because so many insane persons have been possessed by religious hallucinations. Excited to excess, every emotion and passion is capable of bringing on madness; if so, religion, calculated as are its tremendous considerations to influence our feelings, may well be supposed, by possibility, to be a cause of insanity. But still, though the hallucination be a religious one, the real source of insanity may be the very reverse of religion; and thus the religious hallucination itself rather be the effect than the cause of insanity. Generally, those who go mad through religion, as it is called, are persons of susceptible temperament, or very weak heads. It is quite idle to impute the effects, as most people do, to the mysticism of the tenets inculcated, or to the intenseness with which abstract theology is cultivated; or to the subject of religion being impressed too ardently on persons too young, or too much uninformed, to comprehend it. It is obviously much more to the purpose to look to the condition in which the perceptive reasoning powers actually were before religion appeared to bring on derangement. Dr. Burrowes's great experience goes to show that the effect springs immediately from some perversion of religion, or the discussion and adoption of novel and extravagant doctrines, at a juncture when the understanding, from other causes, is already shaken. Nor does he recollect one instance of insanity, arising apparently from a religious

source, where the party had been *undisturbed* about opinions. It appeared to him always to originate during the conflict between opposite doctrines *before* conviction was determined. While the mind is in suspense from the dread of doing wrong in matters of conscience, and the balance is poised between old and new doctrines involving salvation, the feelings are excited (he says) to a morbid degree of sensibility. In so irritable a state, an incident which at any other time would pass unheeded will elicit the latent spark, and inflame the mind to madness.

In a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, Dr. Conolly, of the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum, speaking of the moral treatment of the insane, stated as the result of the experience of his whole life, that distorted views on religious subjects are the cause of at least two-thirds of the cases of mania in ladies, especially those belonging to the upper classes. Touching with all reverence on the proper study of religious books, Dr. Conolly lamented that morbid brooding over subjects of theology and points of doctrine is such a fruitful cause of mental diseases; and he remarked, that of all forms of insanity, religious monomania is the one most prone to lead its unfortunate possessor to the commission of suicide. Although Dr. Conolly's remarks pointed generally to the impropriety and danger of persons — ladies especially — abandoning themselves to self-guidance, and over-prolonged contemplation on subjects of religious controversy, he severely commented upon the injurious effects of those poisonous literary emanations appearing without authority, and dignified most improperly by the name of "religious."

SUICIDES IN NOVEMBER.

The popular notion that more Suicides are committed in the month of November than at any other period of the year is founded on erroneous data. Taking the average number of suicides in each month from the years 1817 to 1826, it was as follows :

January	213	July	301
February	218	August	296
March	275	September	246
April	374	October	198
May	328	November	131
June	336	December	217

Total 3133

It has been clearly established that in all the European capitals, where any thing like correct data can be obtained, the *maximum* of suicides is in the months of June and July, and the minimum in October and *November*. It appears from this, that the disposition has most to do with high temperature; for it has been proved, that when the thermometer of Fahrenheit ranges from 80° to 90°, suicide becomes more prevalent.—*Dr. Forbes Winslow.*

ENGLISH AND FRENCH SUICIDES.

The English have been accused by foreigners of being the *beau idéal* of a suicidal people. The charge is almost too ridiculous to merit serious refutation. It has been clearly established, that where there is one suicide in London, there are five in Paris. In the year 1816, the number of suicides committed in London amounted to 188, the population of Paris being some 400,000 less than that of London. From the years 1827 to 1830, no less than 6900 suicides occurred in France; that is to say, an average of nearly 1800 per annum!

The English, therefore, are not, *par excellence*, a suicidal people. When the inhabitants of a country are industrious and prudent, the crime of self-destruction will be rare. Out of 120,000 persons who insured their lives in the London Equitable Insurance Company, the number of suicides in twenty years was only fifteen. The Irish are stated to be the least disposed of all nations in the world to commit suicide. Dublin and Naples are the two cities in which fewest suicides occur; yet in both the poorer classes are poor indeed. Dr. Graves observes, that an Irishman often murders his neighbour; but he has too high a sense of propriety to think of killing himself. The fact is, that the prevalence of murder prevents the necessity for suicide.—*Dr. Forbes Winslow.*

ANTIDOTES TO POISONS.

There is a common notion that every Poison hath its Antidote; upon which Sir Thomas Browne quaintly observes:

“Though it be true that God made all things double, and that, if we look upon the works of the Most High, there are two and two, one against another; that one contrary hath another, and poison is not without a poison to itself: yet hath the curse so far prevailed, or else our industry defected, that poisons are better known than their antidotes; and some thereof do scarce admit of any. And lastly, although to some poisons men have delivered many antidotes, and in every one is promised an equality unto its adversary, yet do we often find they fail in their effects. Moly will not resist a weaker cup than that of Circe; a man may be poisoned in a Lemnian dish; without the miracle of John, there is no confidence in the earth of Paul; and if it be meant that no poison could work upon him, we doubt the story, and expect no such success from the diet of Mithridates.”—*Vulgar Errors*, b. vii. c. 17.

This piece of olden philosophy has been beautifully illustrated by Shakspeare, in the Friar's soliloquy, in *Romeo and Juliet*, act ii. sc. 3.

“The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;
What is her burying grave, that is her womb:
And from her womb, children of divers kind
We sucking on her natural bosom find:
Many for virtues excellent,
None but for some, and yet all different.

O mickle is the powerful grace that lies
 In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities :
 For naught so vile that on the earth doth live,
 But to the earth some special good doth give ;
 Nor aught so good, but, strain'd from their fair use,
 Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse ;
 Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied ;
 And vice sometime's by action dignified.
 Within the infant rind of this weak flower,
 Poison hath residence and med'cine power :
 For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part ;
 Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
 Two such opposed kings encamp them still
 In man as well as herbs,—grace and rude will ;
 And, where the worser is predominant,
 Full soon the canker death eats up that plant."

SLOW POISON.

In the reign of Edward VI., there was a prevailing notion that Slow Poison might be given to a person, which would infallibly kill him within a given number of months or years. Shakspeare alludes to this in his *Winter's Tale* :

" I would do this, and that with no *rash poison* ;
 But with a lingering dram that should not work
Maliciously like poison."

Barrington supposes the word "*maliciously*" to be here used in the sense it bears in the common forms of indictment for murder.

The notion of a slow poison has long been exploded by physicians, who have accordingly struck out all the antidotes to prevent the effects of it from the new *Pharmacopœia*.

DANGER FROM COPPER SAUCEPANS.

The precise Danger from the use of Copper Saucepans imperfectly tinned is far from being generally understood. It appears that the acid contained in stews, as lemon-juice, though it does not dissolve copper by being merely boiled in it a few minutes, nevertheless if allowed to cool and stand in it for some time, will acquire a sensible impregnation of poisonous matter, as verdigris, or the green band which lines the interior of the vessel. Dr. Falconer observed that syrup of lemons boiled fifteen minutes in copper or brass-pans did not acquire a sensible impregnation ; but if it was allowed to cool and remain in the pans for twenty-four hours, the impregnation was perceptible even to the taste, and was discovered by the test of metallic iron. This fact has been further confirmed by the researches of Proust, who states, that in preparing food or preserves in copper, it is not till the fluid ceases to cover the metal, and is reduced in temperature, that the solution of the metal begins.—*Christison on Poisons*.

Unctuous or greasy solutions are most liable to become impregnated with poisonous verdigris if left long in untinned brass or copper vessels. Sir Humphry Davy maintains that *weak* solutions of common salt, such as are daily made by adding a little salt to boiling vegetables and other eatables in our kitchens, act powerfully on copper vessels, although *strong* ones do not affect them.

Mr. Warrington, of Apothecaries' Hall, has witnessed the action upon copper saucepans, silvered by the electrotypes process, by weak acids, as lemon-juice and vinegar, if allowed to remain in them for a short time. This must arise from the deposited silver being so porous as to allow the acids to permeate its substance, and the action is most likely assisted by a galvanic circuit. The presence of acids was strongly evidenced by the usual tests.

LEAD POISONS.

Disastrous effects have often followed the incautious use of Lead for the fabrication of vessels used in manufactures, and for domestic purposes. A disorder formerly well known in this country, and called, from the county where it was most prevalent, "Devonshire colic," has been traced to the drinking of cider in which lead was dissolved; the malic acid of the apple-juice exerting a powerful chemical action upon the metal, and thereby forming the malate of lead, which is strong poison. In consequence of these evils and their cause being known, dishes, or beds of lead, for cider-presses have generally fallen into disuse. But the reprehensible use of lead plates in dairies is not altogether discontinued; though it is well known that when the milk turns sour, it inevitably absorbs some of the metal.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

Professor Hufeland observes, in his work on Longevity :

"Many fear death less than the operation of dying. People form the most singular conception of the last struggle, the separation of the soul from the body, and the like. But this is all void of foundation. No man certainly ever felt what death is; and as insensibly as we enter into life, equally insensibly do we leave it. The beginning and the end are here united. My proofs are as follow: First, man can have no sensation of dying; for to die, means nothing more than to lose the vital power; and it is the vital power which is the medium of communication between the soul and body. In proportion as the vital power decreases, we lose the power of sensation and of consciousness; and we cannot lose life without at the same time, or rather before, losing our vital sensation, which requires the assistance of the tenderest organs. We are taught also by experience, that all those who ever passed through the first stage of death, and were again brought to life, unanimously asserted that they felt nothing of dying, but sank at once into a state of insensibility.

"Let us not be led into a mistake by the convulsive throbs, the rattling in the throat, and the apparent pangs of death, which are exhibited by many persons when in a dying state. These symptoms are painful only to the spectators, and not to the dying, who are not sensible of them. The case here is the same as if one, from the dreadful contortions of a person in an epileptic fit, should form a conclusion respecting his internal feelings: from what affects us so much, he suffers nothing."

"THE LIGHTNESS BEFORE DEATH."

The brightening-up of the mind previous to dissolution, or, to use the common expression, "the Lightness before Death,"* has led to a notion that dying people are favoured beyond others with a spiritualised conception of things not only relating to time, but likewise to eternity; or, in other words, that they have visions of angelic consolation. This lighting-up of the mind is stated by Mr. Madden to amount to "nothing more than a pleasurable excited condition of the mental faculties, following perhaps a state of previous torpor, and continuing a few hours, or oftentimes moments, before dissolution. This rousing up of the mind is probably produced by the stimulus of dark venous blood circulating through the arterial vessels of the brain, in consequence of the imperfect oxygenation of the blood in the lungs, whose delicate air-cells become impeded by the deposition of mucus on the surface, which there is not sufficient energy in the absorbents to remove; and hence arises the rattling in the throat which commonly precedes death."

DEATH NOT PAIN.

Dr. Philip, in an elaborate paper read before the Royal Society, on the Nature of Death, has adduced many facts and arguments to strip a change which all must undergo of the groundless terrors with which, we have reason to believe, the timid and fanciful have clothed it.

"The approach of death," says Dr. Philip, "if we are aware of it, must always be more or less impressive, not only because we are about to undergo an unknown change, but are leaving all that has hitherto interested and been grateful to us. Even here, however, for the most part, the laws of nature are merciful. Most diseases of continuance (for we shall find there are some exceptions), not only gradually impair our sensibility, but alter our tastes. They not only render us less sensible to all impressions, but less capable of enjoying as far as we are still sensible to them. The sight of a feast to a man who has lost his appetite is disgusting; and a similar change takes place, in a greater or less degree, with respect to all other means of enjoyment.

"These circumstances constitute a great part of the difference of our

* Shakspeare calls it "the lightning:"

"How oft when men are at the point of death
Have they been merry, which their keepers call
A lightning before death."

feelings with respect to what, in common language, is called a violent and a natural death. In the latter, as far as sensibility is impaired, we are more or less in the state of old age; and, in addition to this change, our tastes are perverted. By these means, the relish for life is, in a great degree, destroyed before we lose it. Thus, in disease, the most timid often meet death with composure; and sometimes, as I have repeatedly witnessed, with pleasure. I have even known the information that the danger was passed received only with expressions of regret."

In a communication to the Royal Society, Dr. Philip states, that death, under its various forms, whether arising from old age, excessive stimulants producing exhaustion, debilitating causes that weaken vital action, injury or disease of vital organs, is always preceded by a loss of sensibility, so that the precise action we properly call death is one unattended with pain. This is proved by the experience of those who have been recovered after submersion or strangulation; for they all agree that no pain was felt when the vital actions were suspended, but that acute pain attended their first sensations of returning life. Death, then, is simply the loss of sensibility. This reminds one of the saying of Arcesilaus, that "Death, of all estimated evils, is the only one whose presence never incommoded any body, and which only caused concern during its absence."

UNCERTAIN SIGNS OF DEATH.

The cessation of pulsation in the heart and the arteries, and coldness of the body, are commonly thought to be certain Signs of Death; but the researches of science have proved them to be very fallacious. A more certain sign is the suspension of respiration, for it cannot be continued many minutes without actual death supervening; whereas the action of the heart and arteries may be suspended for a considerable time if respiration be still carried on, however obscurely, and yet these organs be again awakened to activity. The first object, therefore, in supposed death, is to ascertain whether respiration still continues. This can in many instances be perceived by baring the thorax and abdomen; since it is impossible for breathing to be carried on for many seconds without the influence of the respiratory muscles, the effect of the action of which is to elevate the ribs and depress the diaphragm, so as to push forward the sternum, and cause a momentary swelling of the abdomen. It is of great importance to the young practitioner to accustom his eye to judge accurately of these movements, as the ordinary methods of applying a mirror to the mouth, or a downy feather near it, are both liable to error. If the mirror be warmer than the expired breath, no sign can be obtained by it, because the breath is not condensed upon it, or the insensible perspiration from the hand of him who holds it may sully its surface; whilst

“the light and weightless down,” if confided in, will delude more than the prince who is thus described as having been deceived by it, when carrying off the crown from the pillow of his royal father:

“By his gates of breath,
There lies a downy feather, which stirs not:
Did he respire, that light and weightless down
Perchance must move.”

Another symptom, the opacity and want of lustre in the eye, is equally fallacious; even the thin slimy membrane which covers the cornea in the eye of the dead, which breaks in pieces when touched, and is easily removed from the cornea by wiping, sometimes is formed many hours before death has occurred. In several instances also this appearance does not present itself even after death, as, for instance, in cases of poisoning by hydrocyanic or prussic acid, in which the eye retains all its lustre for hours after death, and the iris even contracts when approached by a bright light. This sign, therefore, when taken alone, is of no value.

The state of collapse, which is one of the symptoms of cholera asphyxia, has demonstrated how little is the value of *coldness* of the body as a sign of death. In that singular disease the coldness which accompanies the state of collapse is that of ice, and during it no pulsation can be perceived even at the heart; yet the person lives and breathes and frequently recovers. Drowned persons also, in whom animation is only suspended, and who may be recalled to life, are always cold; whereas in some diseases, apoplexy for example, a certain degree of warmth is perceived for many hours.

Paleness and lividity of countenance always accompany the above state of collapse; the body even becomes blue; this sign, therefore, which is usually set down as one indicating death, is of less value than any others.

Cases, on the other hand, have occurred in which the countenance has remained unchanged a considerable time after death; and in some instances, as Dr. Paris has remarked, “its colour and complexion have not only been preserved, but even heightened:” as if the spirit, scorning the blow which severed it from mortality, had left the smile it raised upon the moveless features; or, as Shakspeare expresses it,

“Smiling, as some fly had tickled slumber;
Not as Death’s dart, being laughed at.”

From these and other observations by the same writer, D. A. T. Thomson, it is evident there are no certain signs that a person is truly dead, except the total cessation of respiration, and the commencing putrefaction of the body.

IS THE FEAR OF DEATH NATURAL TO MAN ?

“The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.”

Many good and great men, in their lives and writings, have laboured to prove that the Fear of Death is not natural to man. In no modern writings, however, have we seen this solemn inquiry more eloquently treated than in the following passage in Dr. Southey's *Colloquies* :

“Surely, to the sincere believer, death would be an object of desire instead of dread, were it not for those ties—those heartstrings—by which we are attached to life. Nor indeed do I believe that it is natural to fear death, however generally it may be thought so. From my own feelings I have little right to judge; for although habitually mindful that the hour cometh, and even now may be, it has never appeared actually near enough to make me duly apprehend its effect upon myself. But from what I have observed, and what I have heard those persons say whose professions lead them to the dying, I am induced to infer that the fear of death is not common; and that where it exists, it proceeds rather from a diseased and enfeebled mind than from any principle in our nature.

Certain it is, that among the poor, the approach of dissolution is usually regarded with a quiet and natural composure, which it is consolatory to contemplate, and which is as far removed from the dead palsy of unbelief, as it is from the delirious raptures of fanaticism. Theirs is a true unhesitating faith; and they are willing to lay down the burden of a weary life in the sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality. Who, indeed, is there that would not gladly make the exchange, if he lived only for himself, and were to leave none who stood in need of him, no eyes to weep at his departure, no hearts to ache for his loss? The day of death, says the preacher, is better than the day of one's birth; a sentence to which whoever has lived long, and may humbly hope that he has not lived ill, must heartily assent. The excellent Henry Scougal used to say, that, “abstracted from the will of God, mere curiosity would make him long for another world.” How many of the ancients committed suicide from the mere weariness of life, a conviction of the vanity of human enjoyments, or to avoid the infirmities of old age! This, too, in utter uncertainty concerning a future state, not with the hope of change, for in their prospect there was no hope; but for the desire of death.”

GIANTS.

The belief in the existence of Giants appears to have been founded upon so many seeming evidences of authority, that, in the fondness of man for wonders, it is not surprising that he has nearly to our own times entertained this fallacy.

First among the circumstances which have fostered this belief, is the very common opinion that, in the earliest ages of the world, men were of greater stature than at present. Pliny observes of the human height (vii. 16), that “the whole race of

mankind is daily becoming smaller ;" a most alarming prospect, if it had been true. But all the statements made on this subject tend to convince us that the human form has not degenerated, and that men of the present age are of the same stature as in the beginning of the world. In the first place, though we read both in sacred and profane history of giants, yet they were at the time of their existence esteemed as wonders, and far above the ordinary proportions of mankind. All the remains of the human body, as bones (and particularly the teeth), which have been found unchanged in the most ancient ruins and burial-places, demonstrate this point clearly. The oldest coffin, or rather sarcophagus, in the world, is that found in the great pyramid of Egypt, and is scarcely six feet and a half long. From looking also at the height of mummies which have been brought to this country, we must conclude that the people who inhabited Egypt two or three thousand years ago, were not superior in size to the present inhabitants of that country. Neither do the inferences from the finding of ancient armour, as helmets or breast-plates, or from buildings designed for the abode and accommodation of men, concur in strengthening the proofs of any diminution of stature in man.

Passing over the fables of the Giants of profane history, we come to their mention in Scripture, before the Flood, in the sixth chapter of Genesis, ver. 4 ("there were giants in the earth in those days"); where the Hebrew word *Nephilim* does not signify giants, as commonly translated, but violent men. Some think that instead of giants in stature, monsters of rapine and wickedness were intended to be represented; and Dr. Johnson says, that the idea of a giant is always associated with something fierce, brutal, and wicked. The context in the next verse, that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," renders the above interpretation more probable than any relation to the stature of man. In the thirteenth chapter of Numbers, v. 33, the reference to "the Giants, the sons of Anak, which came of the Giants," implies the family of Anakim to have been men of great stature, and the context states circumstances of comparison, in the people being as grasshoppers in their sight; still, the fears of the spies may have magnified the dimensions of this family into the gigantic. There can be no reason for our examining here the once much-mooted question of a race of giants, supposed to have existed in ancient time. The same reasons which forbade the belief in a race of dwarfs forbid the belief in a race of giants,—a race of anomalies being a much greater physiological than verbal contradiction; and in reference to giants, it has this further difficulty, that they are, without known exception, always sterile. Many persons, however, doubt whether the normal standard has not been gradually

degenerating, so that by mounting sufficiently high in the records of antiquity we should meet with a standard so enormously surpassing our own as to constitute a race of giants. This question has in it no intrinsic improbability; but there is not a tittle of evidence in its favour. As far as the evidence of monuments, armour, implements, tombs, &c., enables us to form any opinion, we are forced to declare that the men who lived before Agamemnon, strong though they were, were not of nobler stature than the men who now speculate about them. The geologist has not found a bone belonging to these pretended giants; but all the fossils hitherto discovered, and supposed to belong to giants, have, on inspection, been proved to belong to brutes. The bones of an elephant have been figured and described by Buffon as remains of human giants, in the supplement to his classical work; and the supposed fossil remains of gigantic human bones are proved to have belonged to the *Megatherium* and *Palæotherium*, and other individuals. All the evidence by which a colossal race of men was once accredited disappears; and no one scientifically educated now believes that giants ever existed as a *race*, although individual giants have been far from rare. Men of seven feet are not so rare but that many readers must have seen such: the largest man of whose size we have unequivocal evidence, is the Irish giant O'Byrne, whose skeleton, in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, is eight feet in a straight line from the vertex to the sole.

The belief in giants has also been fostered by the exaggerated accounts of the colossal stature of the Patagonians; but Blumenbach observes: "The supposed Patagonian giants have sunk, in the relation of travellers from Magalhaen's time down to our own, from twelve feet to seven feet, and at best are but little taller than other men of good stature."—*Manual of the Elements of Natural History*, p. 38.

The practice of associating certain stupendous phenomena of Nature with giants has doubtless strengthened belief in them, especially in the minds of the young: the "Giant's Causeway," in Antrim, is an example. Indeed, the majority of such phenomena, which strike the beholder with their magnitude, have been generally referred by ignorant persons to giants, or "the Devil." Such are "the Devil's Punchbowl," in Hampshire; "the Devil's Arrows," in Yorkshire; and "the Devil's Jumps," a conspicuous group of barren and somewhat conical hills in Surrey, apparently the remaining portion of a stratum of sand reduced by abrasion to their present irregular form. Cromlechs and other huge stones, and Barrows, or burial-places of heroes, and even Stonehenge itself, have probably caused the existence of giants to linger in the minds of weak persons, until an ac-

quaintance with geology has enabled them to trace these phenomena to natural causes.

Coleridge has appositely exposed the fallacy of the belief in giants, by imagining a traveller in some unpeopled part of America to be attracted to the mountain burial-place of one of the primitive inhabitants. He digs into it, and finds that it contains the bones of a man of mighty stature; and he is tempted to give way to the belief, that as there were giants in those days, so that all men were giants. But a second and wiser thought may suggest to him, that this tomb would never have forced itself upon his notice, if it had not contained a body that was distinguished from others,—that of a man who had been selected as a chieftain or ruler for the very reason that he surpassed the rest of his tribe in stature, and who now lies thus conspicuously inhumed upon the mountain-top, while the bones of his followers are laid unobtrusively together in the plain below.

DEATH OF THE BEETLE AND THE GIANT.

It is a very general opinion that death, under any circumstances, must be the cause of pain; and that even the smaller insects, when dying, are susceptible of pain in a high degree. Shakspeare is often quoted in support of this idea; and we are often told with great pathos, that

The poor beetle which we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.

Had Shakspeare written these lines in the sense in which they are usually quoted, he would have appeared as a very indifferent naturalist; but it is a libel on the memory of the great poet of nature so to quote them. The lines occur in *Measure for Measure*, in the scene where Isabella, in persuading her brother to submit to his fate with fortitude, says:

The sense of death is most in apprehension;
And the poor beetle, &c.

It is evident that (taking the whole passage) Shakspeare's meaning was, not that the pain of death in the beetle is great, but that it is little or nothing in man. And there can be no doubt that this is a correct view of the question; for, however painful the causes producing death may be, there are ample proofs that no actual pain occurs from death itself.—*An Essay on the Beneficent Distribution of the Sense of Pain.* By G. A. Rowell, Oxford, 1857.

Natural Phenomena.

DANGER FROM STORMS.

We are often told that there is no danger if a *certain interval of time* can be counted between the flash and the report of the thunder. This is true enough ; but it is equally true, that *if we can count at all* we are safe.

The destruction actually caused by thunder and lightning is wholly disproportionate to the apprehensions which are felt concerning them. But fear of evil is itself a real evil, and whatever inspires confidence is the occasion of as much happiness as if it really protected and saved. These are the observations of Professor Lovering, of Harvard University, U. S., who illustratively relates :

According to the calculation of chances, and in a general view of the subject, the danger that any particular individual, building, or ship, will be struck by lightning within a specified time is certainly very small. But small as this liability is, it has sometimes been said that a man had three chances of being killed by lightning to every single chance which he could expect of drawing a prize in a lottery ; so that whoever purchases a ticket may feel assured that he is as likely to be killed three times by a thunderbolt while he is drawing one prize !

“ THE THUNDERBOLT.”

Sir John Herschel thus explains this form of lightning :

In the fall of meteoric stones, flashes of fire are seen proceeding from a cloud, and a loud rattling noise like thunder is heard. These circumstances, and the sudden stroke and detonation ensuing, long caused them to be confounded with an effect of lightning, and called *thunderbolts*. But one circumstance is enough to mark the difference : the flash and sound have been perceived occasionally to emanate from a *very small cloud*, insulated in a *clear sky*, which never happens in a thunderstorm, but which is undoubtedly intimately connected with their real origin.— *Introductory Lecture, &c.*

In gravel-pits are found flinty stones, which are generally known by the name of thunderbolts, and are believed by many to come from the clouds ; they are, however, petrified casts of the interior of the shell of several species of the Echinus, *sea-egg*, *sea-hedgehog*, the petrifying matter having occupied the place of the animal, while the chalky shell has perished by the action of the air, or by violence. The shells of recent echini are frequently found on the sea-shore. When the animal is living, the outer part of their covering is furnished with numerous

spines, which enable the creature to roll itself along at the bottom of the water; from this arises its name of the sea-hedgehog.

Arago remarks, that many questions might be asked of *ball-lightning*, in presence of which science would stand mute. Boyle relates an accident to the ship *Albemarle*, near Cape Cod, in 1681. A flash of lightning was seen, and something fell upon the deck which the men could not extinguish or sweep overboard. Deslandes relates, that a church near Brest was struck, when were seen three balls of fire, each four and a-half feet in diameter. In 1772, such a ball was seen to oscillate in the air, and then fall. On Dec. 7, 1838, the royal ship *Rodney* was struck with a sound equal to that of a 32-pounder; two men were killed, and their clothes burnt off. Their comrades said they saw balls of fire, and ran after them to throw them overboard. In 1848, such a ball came slowly up, and exploded upon the mainmast of a United-States ship in the Gulf Stream. These balls are visible from one to ten seconds; they are said sometimes to strike the earth and rebound. Professor Lovering asks, Are they subjective phenomena, originated in the dazzling brilliancy of the lightning, or are they agglomerations of ponderable substances? Fusinieri states, that he has often found iron, in various degrees of oxidation, and sulphur, in the powdery deposits around the fissures through which the lightning has entered. As pertinent to the statement that thunder-stones, so called, are found in the trunks of trees, Arago asks, whether thunder has introduced toads into the trunks of trees. He thinks the danger from "the thunderbolt" no greater than that of being killed by the falling of a flower-pot or chimney-pot; besides the noise itself affects the nerves as well as signalises the danger. Moreover, if the lightning strikes any where but rarely, its inoffensive flashes are innumerable.

TREES DEFENSATIVE AGAINST LIGHTNING.

To certain trees is attributed this property.

"That bays," says Sir Thomas Browne, "will protect from the mischief of lightning and thunder, is a quality ascribed thereto, common with the fig-tree, eagle, and skin of a seal. Against so famous a quality, Vicomercatus produceth experiment of a bay-tree blasted in Italy. And therefore, although Tiberius for this intent did wear a laurel upon his temples, yet did Augustus take a more probable course, who fled under arches and hollow vaults for protection. And though Porta conceive, because in a streporous eruption it riseth against fire, it doth therefore resist lightning, yet is that no emboldening illation. And if we consider the threefold effect of Jupiter's trisulc, to burn, discuss, and terebrate; and if that be true which is commonly delivered, that it will melt the blade, yet pass the scabbard—kill the child, yet spare the mother—dry up the wine, yet leave the hogshead entire—though it favour the amulet, it may not spare us,—it will be unsure to rely on any preservative: it is no security to be dipped in Styx, or clad in the armour of Ceneus."—*Vulgar Errors*, b. ii. c. 7.

The beech was long thought to be a protective tree from lightning, but this has been disproved; and it was once believed that the house-leek, if grown upon a roof, would protect the house from being struck with lightning.

FALL OF METEORIC STONES.

The fall of metallic or stony bodies from the atmosphere is

recorded by writers of every age of classic antiquity, and of the middle and dark ages. After the Reformation, the fall of meteorites was witnessed and described by several natural philosophers, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, similar events took place, and were attested by irrefragable moral evidence. But the opinion that nothing was to be believed which could not directly be accounted for, was now very prevalent. The records of the fall of meteoric stones were consequently rejected as impossible, and incompatible with the laws of nature; and specimens of stones and iron that had been seen to fall by hundreds of people, were preserved in cabinets of natural history as ordinary minerals, which the credulous and superstitious regarded as having fallen from the clouds. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, accounts of the fall of three similar stones, though attested in the most convincing manner, were discredited by a Committee of the French Academy of Sciences, one of whom was the celebrated Lavoisier.* At length, however, the subject was, in 1801, subjected by Mr. Edward Howard, F.R.S., to a train of exact research: stones stated to have fallen from meteors in various parts of the world were collected and examined, and shown to bear a decided resemblance to each other, whilst they were altogether dissimilar from every known mineral.

EARTHQUAKES IN ENGLAND.

Earthquakes, to a reader of history, appear to have been very frequent; and statements of "convulsions," "swallowings up," and "hills removed," are by no means rare. But Dean Conybeare writes, that there has not been a shock of earthquake in England sufficient to throw down a church-tower. The humbler classes in the country, as well as those immediately above them, are too often disposed to attribute many phenomena to the agency of earthquakes. The great land-slip of Dowlands and Bindon, S. E. Devon, Dec. 25, 1839, took place after a wet season. Great slips occurred on the Jura and other places; each having resulted from known causes, in the same locality. Deans Buckland and Conybeare happened to be near at the time; their explanations were without effect upon the assembled wonderers. Their science was ridiculed; local history was treated as a fable. — *Robert's Social Life, &c.*

DREAD OF ECLIPSES.

Eclipses continued to be viewed in England with awe to

* While the bulk of the French philosophers were yet undecided what to think, the fall of some thousands of stones at L'Aigle, in Normandy, the testimonies to which were scrutinised with judicial circumspection and jealousy, compelled the most determined scepticism to an unwilling assent.—*Brayley's Notes to Browne's Vulgar Errors.*

within a century and a-half ago. Sunday 25th February 1589, was called Dark Sunday before Shrovetide, owing to the eclipse on that Sabbath-day, "fearful to all people's sight to behold." The appearance of a parhelion was deemed sufficiently wonderful to be entered in parish-registers.

Of the storm which Sir Symonds D'Ewes calls "the great tempest" of 17th of June 1611, an ancient said there was a prophecy before it came, as if the world should then have ended.

THE NEW MOON.

The very general idea that the dim form of the full moon seen with the new moon is a sign of rain, seems to be an old one; the appearance may also have predicted something worse than storm, and have been considered ominous by the sailors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:—

"I saw the new moon late yestreen
With the old moon in her arm;
And if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we'll come to harm."—*Sir Patrick Spens.*

RAIN IN EGYPT.

It has long been a prevalent opinion that it never or very rarely rains in Egypt. Formerly, it was said that there was no rain at all; and several wet days having been observed of late years, they were supposed to have been caused by a change of climate, produced, it was imagined, by some extensive plantations in the valley of the Nile. M. Jomard, however, shows, by documentary evidence, that all these opinions of no rain and change of climate are erroneous. Rain, and heavy rains, with thunder and lightning, though rare visitors, are not strangers in Egypt.—*Railway Magazine.*

Sir Archibald Alison, in his *History of Europe*, writes as follows:—"It never rains in Egypt; centuries may elapse without more than a shower of drizzling mist moistening the surface of the soil. It is said that it has not rained in Egypt for 1700 years." A correspondent of the *Times* writes from Alexandria, October 31, 1856, as follows:—"Englishmen express their astonishment at the heavy rains we have lately experienced, having come with the erroneous impression that it never rains in Egypt." Upon this it is naïvely asked—whether the rain which is referred to thus by the above correspondent is the first which has appeared in Egypt for 1700 years, or whether the great modern historian was in error when he wrote the passage above cited?

Progress of Society.

POPULAR INTELLIGENCE.

It is a common error to overrate the intelligence of the present day, and underrate our forefathers in the intellectual scale; for, although our nomadic ancestors were long without the cultivation of knowledge and literature, they were not, therefore, mentally inert. "There is an education of the mind, distinct from the literary, which is gradually imparted by the contingencies of active life. In this, which is always the education of the largest portion of mankind, our ancestors were never deficient. The operation of practical but powerful intellect may be traced in the wisdom and energy of their great political mechanisms and municipal institutions. It pervades their ancient laws; and is displayed in full dimensions, as to our Saxon and Norman ancestors, in that collection of our native jurisprudence which one Braston has transmitted to us. The system of our common law there exhibited, was admirably adapted to their wants and benefit; and has mainly contributed to form the national bulwarks, and that individual character by which England has been so long enriched and so vigorously upheld."—*Sharon Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons.*

NEW VIEWS.

We are too apt to condemn others for their apparent dullness in understanding any new position in advance of their previous intelligence, as the conviction of an error. Sir David Brewster felicitously observes, that "men are not necessarily obstinate because they choose to display rooted and venerable errors; nor are they absolutely dull when they are long in understanding, and slow in embracing, newly-discovered truths."

CORRECTION OF ERROR.

To unlearn is harder than to learn; and the Grecian flute-player was right in requiring double fees from those pupils who had been taught by another master. "I am rubbing their father out of my children as fast as I can," said a clever widow of rank and fashion.

Sir Thomas Browne attributes the belief in fallacies to the want of knowledge; and, speaking of the persons who are under the influence of such belief, says:

“Their understanding is so feeble in the discernment of falsities, and averting the errors of reason, that it submitteth to the fallacies of sense, and is unable to rectify the error in its sensations. Thus, the greater part of mankind, having but one eye of sense and reason, conceive the earth far bigger than the sun, the fixed stars lesser than the moon, their figures plane, and their spaces from the earth equidistant. For thus their sense informeth them, and herein their reason cannot rectify them; and therefore, hopelessly continuing in mistakes, they live and die in their absurdities, passing their days in perverted apprehensions and conceptions of the world, derogatory unto God and the wisdom of the creation.”*

ABSURD NOTIONS UNIVERSAL.

The ingenious author of the *Plurality of Worlds* ridicules the Chinese, because, says he, they see a thousand stars fall at once into the sea. It is very likely that the Emperor Kam-hi ridiculed this notion as much as Fontenelle. Some Chinese almanac-maker had, it should seem, been good-natured enough to speak of these meteors after the manner of the people, and to take them for stars. Every country has its foolish notions. All the nations of antiquity made the sun lie down in the sea, where we for a long time sent the stars. We have believed that the clouds touched the firmament; that the firmament was a hard substance, and that it supported a reservoir of water. It has not long been known in our towns, that the Virgin-thread (*fil de la Vierge*), so often found in the country, is nothing more than the thread spun by a spider. Let us not laugh at any people. Let us reflect that the Chinese had astrolabes and spheres before we could read; and that if they made no great progress in astronomy, it is through that same respect for the ancients which we have had for Aristotle.—(*Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary*.) The following note upon the early civilisation of China may here be acceptable:

When Heliogabalus purchased the silk, which so shocked the severe propriety of Pliny, for its weight in gold, the populace of China used it for their common apparel. When the classic literature of golden ages was perishing unknown to the ignorance, or was falsified by the affectation and prejudices, of scholiasts and ascetics, the walls of Nankin were placarded with advertisements of cheap lanterns and programmes of popular comedies. And when the wise men of Greece were ridiculing the credulity which could believe that, in sailing towards the west, the sun had been observed on the right hand of the voyagers, professional astronomers were appointed in China to observe the movements of the sidereal heavens and determine the annual period, taking into consideration the precession of the equinoxes. As to their domestic under-

* A contemporary thus points to a common error of this class: “Men talk of Nature as an abstract thing, and lose sight of Nature while they do so. They charge upon Nature matters with which she has not the smallest connection, and for which she is no way responsible.” This is one of those happy quips of world-knowledge which abound in the writings of Mr. Charles Dickens, and which bid fair to outlive the gossamer of his genius.

takings, we find complete municipal organisation, and a realm intersected with canals for public convenience, ere the laws of the ten tables were promulgated or the Appian aqueducts constructed.—*Edinburgh Review*, No. 200.

CREDULITY OF GREAT MINDS.

Of things palpably fabulous in our eyes, it is not enough to say that they could not possibly be believed by this or that man of great intellectual endowments. To what absurd conclusions would not this principle carry us! We should be obliged by it to hold that no instructed man ever believed in witchcraft, in judicial astrology, or the philosopher's stone! If the steady mind of the great discoverer of America could be seduced by the belief that he had there found the site of the terrestrial paradise; and if Raleigh could seriously discuss the question, as he does, in his *History of the World*, whether that site ought not rather to be sought near the orb of the moon,—he might well be allowed also to believe in *El Dorado*, without prejudice either to his sincerity or mental sanity. Was it half as extraordinary that Raleigh should, in his day, believe in the fables in question, as it was that Dr. Johnson should, in his, believe in the second-sight? It has been justly observed by this vigorous thinker, that “it is the great failing of a strong imagination to catch greedily at wonders.”

WORTH OF EXPERIENCE.

Quetelet, in his work on *The Theory of Probabilities*, maintains that it substitutes science for that which is conventionally called practice or experience, and which is most frequently but a blind routine. He then proceeds:

In this respect also prejudice is so deeply rooted, and prepossession is such, that every instant the most strange assertions may be expected from the mouths of otherwise skilful persons. It is now a well-proved fact, although the cause is unknown, that there are generally more boys born than girls. Well, announce this fact in the presence of an accoucheur who is not aware of it, he will no doubt tell you that his experience has shown a contrary result. Then ask how many observations his experience comprehends, he will answer you, without exposing himself to a charge of exaggeration, that he could quote more than a thousand—what do I say?—more than two thousand, more than three thousand. Ask again if he has taken the trouble to register all these observations, and he will immediately appeal to his memory. You will then see that these two thousand or three thousand observations which he advanced reduce themselves simply to those which most particularly struck him, and which have contributed to form what he designated his experience.

The number of male births exceeds but slightly the number of female births. The ratio is 106 to 100, nearly, for the whole of Europe. When a large population is operated on, that of a kingdom for instance, this ratio is nearly constant every year; but it may oscillate between very wide limits when it refers to a populous town, where it is not uncommon to notice during a year more girls than boys.

TEMPORAL JUDGMENTS.

Mr. Addison, in order to illustrate the folly of ascribing Temporal Judgments to any particular crimes, while there is in truth no calamity or affliction which is supposed to have happened as a judgment to a vicious man that does not sometimes happen to men of approved religion and virtue, relates the old Greek story of Diagoras:

“When Diagoras, the atheist, was on board one of the Athenian ships, there arose a very violent tempest; upon which the mariners told him that it was a just judgment upon them for having taken so impious a man on board. Diagoras begged them to look upon the rest of the ships that were in the same distress, and asked them whether or no Diagoras was on board every vessel in the fleet? We are all involved in the same calamities, and subject to the same accidents; and when we see any one of the species under any particular oppression, we should look upon it as arising from the common lot of human nature, rather than from the guilt of the person who suffers.”

All this may be true, and the lesson is a good one, as Mr. Addison's lessons generally are; but still we may doubt whether the question of Diagoras was so complete a poser as it is represented to have been. Who shall say that there was *not* a Diagoras on board every vessel in the fleet? that is to say, an impious person drawing down wrath from on high? Perhaps Diagoras himself was not really so atheistical as he was vain of the profession of atheism.—*Morning Post*, Sept. 22, 1856.

PARSIMONY AND ECONOMY.

Burke thus felicitously distinguishes these opposite lines of conduct, which in domestic affairs are too often confounded. “Mere Parsimony is not economy. Expense, and great expense, may be an essential part in true economy. Economy is a distributive virtue, and consists not in saving, but in selection. Parsimony requires no providence, no sagacity, no powers of combination, no comparison, no judgment. Mere instinct, and that not an instinct of the noblest kind, may produce this false economy in perfection.”

DOCTRINES OF CHANCE.

The Doctrines of Chance are of much less importance than most persons are inclined to regard them. The cause is thus explained by a popular writer:—“Chance very little disturbs events, which in their natural constitution were designed to happen or fail according to some determined law. It may produce the *appearance* of inequality in the turning up of the head or reverse of a coin; still the appearance, one way or other, will perpetually tend to the proportion of equality. Thus in all

cases it will be found, that although chance produces irregularities, still the odds will be infinitely great; so that in process of time these irregularities will bear no proportion to recurrence of that order which naturally results from original design."

POPULATION AND PROSPERITY.

The ratio of increase in a Population has almost universally been taken as an accurate test of prosperity. Such, however, appears not to be the fact; for more recent opinions state, that a community nearly stationary promises better for enjoyment. —*Proceedings of the British Association*, 1838.

CLEVER STATESMEN.

However great talents may command the admiration of the world, they do not generally best fit a man for the discharge of social duties. Swift remarks, that "Men of great parts are often unfortunate in the management of public business, because they are apt to go out of the common road by the quickness of their imagination. This I once said to my Lord Bolingbroke, and desired he would observe, that the clerk in his office used a sort of ivory knife with a blunt edge to divide a sheet of paper, which never failed to cut it even only by requiring a steady hand; whereas, if he should make use of a sharp pen-knife, the sharpness would make it go often out of the crease, and disfigure the paper."

PROHIBITED TRADE.

Say, the great political economist of France, quotes a forcible instance of the effects of Prohibition. During the reign of Napoleon, vessels were despatched from London, freighted with sugar, coffee, tobacco, and cotton twist, for Salonica (Macedonia), whence these articles of merchandise were carried by beasts of burden, by way of Servia and Hungary, to Germany and France; so that an article consumed at Calais was brought from England, only twenty miles distant, by a route which, in point of expense, must have been equivalent to a voyage twice round the globe.

UNPOPULAR IMPROVEMENTS.

There is not one single source of human happiness against which there have not been uttered the most lugubrious predictions. Turnpike-roads, navigable canals, inoculation, hops, tobacco, the reformation, the revolution. There are always a set of worthy and moderately-gifted men, who bawl out death and ruin upon every valuable change which the varying aspect

of human affairs absolutely and imperiously requires. It would be extremely useful to make a collection of the hatred and abuse that all those changes have experienced, which are now admitted to be marked improvements in our condition. Such a history might make folly a little more modest and suspicious of its own decisions.—*Sydney Smith.*

ERRORS IN PRINT.

Every statement in print receives, from this very circumstance, a kind of authority; and what has not been said in print? Newspapers, much as they contribute to general information, also contribute much to the propagation of unfounded reports. The counter-statements of opposite papers serve, indeed, in some measure to correct each other's misrepresentations; but as the mass of people read only the papers of their own party, misstatements will inevitably gain a footing; and a man who is desirous of believing only the truth, must subject the stories admitted on hearsay by his party to a critical scrutiny. It was long believed that a female was raised to the papal chair, under the name of John VIII.; and how many persons have credited the stories that Napoleon used to beat his wife, which idle tales are repeated in some miscalled histories of Buonaparte!

REASON AND REVELATION.

Much scepticism has been engendered of late years by tyros in science straining after identities of physical truths with Scripture. "There are, indeed," observes the Rev. W. L. Harcourt, "certain common points in which Reason and Revelation mutually assist each other; but, in order that they may ever be capable of doing so, let us keep their *paths* distinct, and observe their *accordances* alone; otherwise our reasonings run round in a circle, while we endeavour to accommodate physical truth to Scripture, and Scripture to physical truth."—*Address to the British Association, 1830.*

WRITING FOR THE MANY.

The great error of those who write for the masses is, their rating too highly the average intellect of those whom they strive to attract as readers. Molière's justification to some one who had censured him for preferring broad, homely merriment, to elevated comedy, may be quoted by those who aim at wide popularity by common means, but are capable of better things; and the observation may apply to almost any pursuit. "If I wrote simply for fame," said Molière, "I should manage very differently; but I write for the support of my company. I must not address myself, therefore, to a few people of educa-

tion, but to the mob; and this latter class of gentry take very little interest in a continued elevation of style and sentiment."

COMMON CAUSE OF FAILURE.

Where a thing requires a great deal of care, it is well done, because the whole attention is directed to it; where a little attention would suffice, even that little is refused, and some accident follows.

EXCUSES FOR NOT RELIEVING THE POOR.

Pecuniary relief is generally the most efficacious kind of charity, and, at the same time, that from which men are most apt to excuse themselves. The pretences of these excuses are various, and are thus treated in the *Moral Philosophy* of Archdeacon Paley:

1. *That they have nothing to spare*, that is, nothing for which they have not some other use; nothing which their plan of expense, together with the savings they have resolved to lay by, will not exhaust; never reflecting whether it be in their power, or that it is their duty, to retrench their expenses, and contract their plan, "that they may have to give to them that need;" or rather that this ought to have been part of their plan originally.

2. *That they have families of their own, and that charity begins at home.* A father is no doubt bound to adjust his economy with a view to the reasonable demands of his family upon his fortune; and until a sufficiency for these is acquired, or will be in due time probably acquired (for in human affairs probability is enough), he is justified in declining *expensive* liberality; for to take from those who want, in order to give to those who want, adds nothing to the stock of public happiness. Thus far, therefore, and no farther, the plea in question is an excuse for parsimony, and an answer to those who solicit our bounty.

3. *That charity does not consist in giving money, but in benevolence, philanthropy, love to all mankind, goodness of heart, and the like.* But hear St. James: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it profit?"

4. *That giving to the poor is not mentioned in St. Paul's description of charity, in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians.* This is not a description of charity, but of good nature; and it is not necessary that every duty be mentioned in every place.

5. *That they pay the poor-rates.* They might as well allege that they pay their debts; for the poor have the same right to that portion of a man's property which the laws assign them, that the man himself has to the remainder.

6. *That they employ many poor persons.* If they do so for their own sake, not the poor's, the excuse is inadmissible; otherwise it is a good plea.

7. *That the poor do not suffer so much as we imagine; that education and habit have reconciled them to the evils of their condition, and make them easy under it.* Habit can never reconcile human nature to the extremities of cold, hunger, and thirst, any more than it can reconcile the

hand to the touch of a red-hot iron; besides, the question is not, how unhappy any one is, but how much more happy we can make him.

8. *That these people, give them what you will, will never thank you, or think of you for it.* In the first place, this is not true; in the second place, it is not for the sake of their thanks they ought to be relieved.

9. *That we are so liable to be imposed upon.* If due inquiry be made, our motive and merit are the same; besides that the distress is generally real, whatever has been the cause of it.

10. *That they should apply to their parishes.* That is not always practicable; to which we may add, that there are many requisites to a comfortable subsistence, which parish relief does not always supply; that there are some who would suffer almost as much from receiving parish relief as by the want of it; and, lastly, that there are many modes of charity to which this answer does not relate at all.

11. *That giving money encourages idleness and vagrancy.* This is true only of injudicious and indiscriminate generosity.

12. *That we have too many objects of charity at home to bestow any thing upon strangers;* or that there are other charities which are more useful, or stand in greater need. The value of this excuse depends entirely upon the *fact*, whether we actually relieve those neighbouring objects, and contribute to those other charities.

This enumeration seems to exhaust the pretences which men commonly employ to excuse themselves from dispensing private charity. What they are worth, when put to the test of examination, the reader will judge for himself.

THAT "POVERTY IS NO CRIME."

A gentleman in narrow circumstances, quoting the above saying, "Poverty is no crime," was answered, "Yes, but it is worse." Many prove that they are seriously of this opinion by the dishonest arts which they practise to get money. Others look down upon the indigent, as though the things external to a man, and not the man himself, were the proper objects of regard. All such people earn the stern rebuke of Gray, that their poverty is in their mind. Archbishop Whately, however, dwells upon the just distinction that, though poverty is not disgraceful, the exhibition of it is felt to be indecent. A man of sense is not ashamed of confessing it, but he keeps the mark of it out of sight. He mentions, that a person who disputed the assertion, observed in refutation of it, "Why, this coat that I now have on, I have had turned, because I could not well afford a new one; and I care not who knows it." His instance, as the Archbishop remarks, proved the point he was controverting, or he would have worn the coat without turning. He might have had it scoured, if needful; but, though clean, it would still have looked threadbare; and he did not like to make this display of poverty.—*Quarterly Review.*

THE CURFEW.

The erroneous notions which long prevailed upon the original object of the Curfew, show how liable men are to overcharge

the memory of an oppressor, and to mistake good for evil intentions, simply because they emanate from a man usually characterised for cruelty. The custom of covering up fires about sunset in summer, and about eight at night in the winter, at the ringing of a bell, called the *couvre-feu** or curfew-bell, is supposed to have been introduced by William I., and to have been imposed upon the English as a badge of servitude; and it has often been quoted to show with what severity the Conqueror sought to press his cruel government, even to the very firesides of our forefathers. Thus, we read of the Battle of Hastings becoming a tale of sorrow, which old men narrated by the light of the embers until warned to silence by the tolling of the curfew. Thomson, in his *Seasons*, countenances this opinion of the tyranny of the custom :

“ The shivering wretches, at the curfew sound,
Dejected sunk into their sordid beds ;
And through the mournful gloom of ancient times,
Mused sad, or dreamt of better.”

Henry, in his *History of Britain*, 4to edition, vol. iii. p. 567, however, says this opinion does not seem well-founded ; for there is sufficient evidence that the same custom prevailed in France, Spain, Italy, Scotland, and probably in all the other countries of Europe, at this period : it was intended as a precaution against fires, which were then very frequent and very destructive when so many houses were built of wood ; and of such fires the Saxon Chronicle makes frequent mention. Again, the Curfew is stated to have been used in England at a much earlier date than the Conqueror's reign, and by one of England's best monarchs, Alfred, the restorer of the University of Oxford ; who ordained that all the inhabitants of that city should, at the ringing of the Curfew-bell at Carfax, cover up their fires and go to bed ; which custom, it is stated in Peshall's *History of Oxford*, “ is observed to this day, and the bell as constantly rings at eight as Great Tom tolls at nine.” It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the Conqueror revived or continued the custom, which he had previously established in Normandy, and regarded in both countries as a beneficial law of police.

We likewise find the Curfew mentioned to a very late period as a common and approved regulation, which would not have been the case had it been originally imposed as “ a badge of servitude,” or a law to prevent the people meeting to concert by their firesides the means of resisting William's oppressive rule. We even find the ringing of the Curfew-bell provided for by bequests of tracts of land or other property ; although

* The name is also traced to the Norman *carrefou*. Pasquier states it to be derived from *carfou* or *garefou*, as being intended to advertise the people to secure themselves from the robbers and revellers of the night.

this ringing was but the relic of the custom; for the people are not supposed to have been compelled to put out their fires and lights beyond the reign of William II. Henry I. restored the use of lamps and candles at court in the night after the ringing of the Curfew-bell, which had been prohibited by his predecessors.—*William of Malmesbury*, fo. 88.

Polydore Vergil favours the vulgar notion of the custom being oppressive, by observing: “In order that he (William) might convert the native ferocity of the people into indolence and sloth, he deprived them of their arms, and ordained that each head of a family should retire to rest about eight o’clock in the evening, *having raked the ashes over his fire*; and that for this purpose a sign should be made through every village, which is even now preserved, and called in the Norman *Cover-feu*.” Voltaire, in his *Universal Dictionary*, on the other hand, ridicules the idea of the Curfew being a badge of degradation, and regards it as only “an ancient police.”

In further proof that the custom cannot justly be considered as evidence of an unworthy state of subjection, is the fact that the obligation to extinguish fires and lights at a certain hour was imposed upon his subjects by David I. king of Scotland, in his *Leges Burgorum*; and in this case, no one ever imagined that it conveyed any sign of infamy or servitude.

ELIZABETHAN LIVING.

It is the vulgar idea that Queen Elizabeth’s maids-of-honour breakfasted on beef-steaks and ale, and that wine was such a rarity as to be sold only by apothecaries as a cordial. The *science* of good living was as well understood in those days as it is now, though the *fashion* might be somewhat different: the nobility had French cooks; and among the dishes enumerated, we find “not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, rabbit, capon, pig,” but also red, or fallow deer, and a great variety of fish and wild-fowl, with pastry and creams, Italian confections, and preserved fruits, and sweetmeats from Portugal; nay, we are even told of cherries served up at twenty shillings a pound. The variety of wines can hardly be exceeded at present: for a writer of Elizabeth’s time mentions fifty-six different kinds of French wine, and thirty-six Spanish and Italian wine, imported into England.—*Mrs. Jameson*.

FALLACIES RESPECTING EGYPT.

Till the recent researches of travellers into the monuments of the Egyptians, much of our information respecting them was derived from the Greeks; upon which Sir Gardner Wilkinson remarks:

“The information so obtained, can only be relied on when not at variance with the monuments, or with probability; while its general uncertainty may be inferred from some of the false impressions it is known to have conveyed. Thus, we are told that onions were worshipped; that Isis had the head of a cow; Anubis that of a dog (instead of a jackal); that a sphinx was composed of a lion and a virgin; that an Egyptian doorway had sloping sides (which in reality are confined to the *outer* line of the jambs); that obelisks were only dedicated to the sun; that a crocodile moved its upper instead of its lower jaw; that the trochilus (a most obliging bird) performed the office of toothpick to that unprepossessing monster, removing the leeches from its gaping mouth; that vines grew only in one part of the country; that men carried burdens on their heads, women on their shoulders; that ships made of the papyrus, or of planks sewed together with bands of that rush, carried cargoes of many tons weight, and even sailed on the ocean; that the Egyptian gods were deified beings who had lived on earth; and numerous other fallacies, handed down to us as established facts.”*—*The Egyptians in the time of the Pharaohs*, p. 6.

EARTHENWARE BOATS ASCRIBED TO THE EGYPTIANS.

Juvenal describes the Boats of the Egyptians as if they were Earthenware. We are told that such earthenware ships were used on the Nile; that in the Delta, navigation was so easy, that some used boats of baked earth; that such were used in some of the other canals of Egypt; and that they are called *pictæ* (painted), because these boats of baked earth were marked with various colours.

Now this appears very strange. That earthenware may be so made as to swim, is easily understood; the experiment may be made at any tea-table, by putting one of the cups into a basin of water. But that a boat, of a size to be of any use to the Egyptians, should be made of such materials, and commonly to be seen in the Delta, and other canals of Egypt, appears incredible, since they must have been of earth baked or burnt in the fire, which could only be done with difficulty; and when effected, what a trifle would demolish them, and how unsafe must have been such a navigation!

But all this is deciphered by modern travellers; for all that is meant is, that sometimes the Egyptians make use of rafts, which are made to float by empty vessels of earthenware fastened underneath them.

“In order to cross the Nile,” Norden tells us, “the inhabitants have recourse to the contrivance of a float, made of large earthen pitchers, tied close together, and covered with leaves of palm-trees. The man that conducts it has commonly in his mouth a cord, with which he fishes as he passes on.” These are undoubtedly the Egyptian earthenware-boats of Juvenal.

* We have no evidence of their infancy as a nation; and this fact leaves us to imagine the remoteness of the period when the Egyptians were in a barbarous and primitive condition.

WHEN DID THE CENTURY BEGIN ?

Dr. Lardner, in his excellent volume on *Common Things*, has thus replied to the above question, founded upon error :

Historical events are often referred to by stating that they occurred in such or such a century. Now, one might well suppose that there could arise no obscurity or confusion in the use of such a term ; yet it is notorious that *after the year 1800, questions were constantly raised in society as to whether such or such a day or month belonged to the eighteenth or the nineteenth.*

The first day, and the starting-point or zero, of the Christian chronological scale, was the midnight with which the 1st of January, 1 A.D., commenced. This was the moment, therefore, at which the *first century* began ; and it ended evidently when, dating from that moment, 100 complete years had elapsed. The first century, therefore, terminated, and the second began, at the midnight between the 31st December, 100 A.D., and the 1st January, 101 A.D. In like manner, the second century terminated, and the third began, at the midnight between the 31st December, 200 A.D., and the 1st January, 201 A.D. It is evident, therefore, that the entire year, 100 A.D., belonged to the first century, and the entire year, 200 A.D., to the second century ; and in the same manner it follows that the entire year 1800 A.D. belonged to the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century, therefore, commenced with the 1st January, 1701 A.D., and terminated with the 31st December, 1800 A.D., both these days belonging to that century. In like manner, the first day of the nineteenth century was 1st January, 1801 A.D., and its last day will be 31st December, 1900 A.D.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN MEDALS AND COINS.

The distinction between striking medals and coins is very essential. A medal is usually engraved in high relief, like those upon ancient coins ; and it requires a succession of blows, sometimes forty or fifty, with repeated annealings, to make a perfect impression. A modern coin, on the contrary, is usually brought up with one blow, although with the disadvantage of the metal being harder. Standard gold, for instance, consists of one-twelfth of alloy : medals are usually made of fine gold ; the engraving upon the coin is consequently made with a suitable degree of relief.—*B. Wyon, R.A.*

PORTRAITS ON COINS.

The fidelity of the likenesses of the English monarchs on their coins, has been strangely overrated ; and has led to many erroneous impressions of the personal characteristics of our sovereigns ; although there is an epoch at which these representations assume some claim to authenticity. M. Planché has compared the monarchs anterior to Henry VIII. to “ the visioned line of Banquo, imaginary creations, with so strong a family resemblance even in their dresses, that we may exclaim with Macbeth, the

‘ Other gold-bound brow is like the first,
A third is like the former.
Why do you show me this ? ’ ”

Numismatists are not, however, uniform in their opinions as to the extent of the reliance to be placed upon these medallion portraits. Mr. Akerman, F.S.A., observes: “ It is quite evident that the effigies of the English monarchs on their coins are not *likenesses* until the time of Henry VIII., whatever the ingenious may say to the contrary. Some have supposed that the rude figures on the Saxon coins are likenesses, but the idea is ridiculous. Folkes, in his *Table of English Silver Coins*, remarks that the kings of England are represented *bearded* on their great seals, but always smooth-faced on their coins.—*Numismatic Manual*.

Mr. Till observes upon this interesting point of identity :

“ Having paid some attention to the portraits of our sovereigns, I am decidedly of opinion that we occasionally see a real though rough likeness in profile of our earliest kings, even of William I. As to Henry I. and Stephen, any one who is a judge of portraits may find, on comparison, a certain profile preserved throughout. With full-faced coins, the case is different; though I have seen a halfpenny and a gold noble of Richard II., both struck when he was a boy, and conveying, to a certain extent, the image of the youthful sovereign. But it is not until the reign of Henry VIII. that we obtain a real likeness on a full-faced coin.”—*Essay on the Roman Denarius*, &c. p. 67, note.

Want of judgment in the engravers at the Royal Mint has doubtless multiplied these errors in modern as in ancient times. This is especially instanced in the coinage of George III. The head of this monarch upon his crown-piece by Pistrucci is, as to likeness, completely erroneous. Indeed, this artist, Mr. Till infers, “ never could have seen George III. It excites our risibility to notice the first half-crown of this monarch, exhibiting our respected old king with a neck like unto a gladiator. This, it appears, did not please: another was executed; the fault, if any, was mended, and *still no likeness*. * * * If the head on the crown-piece was a likeness, why not then have engraved the half-crowns from the same model? They present very different portraits altogether; surely this must be very absurd—what can be more ridiculous, than to see three coins representing the same person, issued at one and the same time, all bearing different countenances? Why not have taken the copper twopenny-piece, engraved at Soho (near Birmingham), by Kutchler, as a copy?—this is *like* the sovereign, probably one of the best likenesses extant; or, if at a loss, many fine medals by the same artist, or the Wyons, convey a faithful resemblance of George III.”

In connection with the above inquiry, we may remark, that the authenticity of Houbraken’s celebrated portraits of English sovereigns,

whence the illustrations to our popular histories have mostly been copied, rests upon very slender inference. "Houbraken, as the late Lord Orford justly observes, was ignorant of our history, uninquisitive into the authenticity of the drawings which were transmitted to him, and engraved whatever was sent; adducing two instances, namely, Carr, Earl of Somerset, and Secretary Thurloe, as not only spurious, but not having the least resemblance to the persons they pretend to represent. An anonymous, but evidently well-informed writer (in the *Gentleman's Magazine*), further states, that Thurloe's, and about *thirty* of the others, are copied from heads painted for no one knows who."—*Lodge's Illustrated Biography*.

ERROR HALFPENCE.

Of all the blunders which have emanated from our National Mint, those of the two Error Halfpence of George II. and George III., formerly termed "Tower Halfpence," stand pre-eminent. Indeed, it must ever remain a matter of astonishment, that such a circumstance could have taken place. If the collector of these coins will take the trouble to search, he will find, in the year 1730, one of the halfpence of the first-named sovereign spelled *GEOGIUS*. This certainly is very extraordinary; but, is it not much more so to find subsequently one issuing from the Mint of his successor, George III., likewise misspelt? This reads *GEORIVS* instead of *GEORGIUS*, and was issued in 1772. There is reason to believe, that, after the latter coins were circulated, a reward was offered for each piece, if returned to the Mint. This is probable, as they were more rare than those of George II.

QUEEN ANNE'S FARTHING.

The popular error of the extreme rarity of the farthing of Queen Anne is attributed by Akerman to the high price brought by the pattern pieces. Only one type of the farthing was in circulation, but some hundreds were struck: it brings from seven shillings to one guinea. This error is explained at greater length in *Things not generally Known*, pp. 216-7.

LIGHT GUINEAS.

We are too apt to consider a much-worn Guinea to be of short weight. Mr. Hatchett, F.R.S., however, proved that the obliteration of the impressions on gold coins is not always attended with a diminution of weight; but that the supposed abrasion of the prominent parts is, in fact, a depression of those parts into the mass, bringing them to a level with the rest.

THE ANTIQUE.—ANTIQUITIES.

The term *antique* is often erroneously applied to old or ancient works of art; whereas it properly implies the beauty and perfection, and not the age, of such labours. Thus the "build-

ings of the Egyptians, although of much higher antiquity than even those of the Greeks, are called *ancient*, not *antique*." The word *antiquity* is rarely applied with precision. Mr. Woods remarks: "How terms change their signification in different places! Four hundred years give a monument a full claim to antiquity in England; but in Italy they leave it quite modern." The name of *antiquary* is supposed to have been first used in England: "if it be true that Henry VIII. conferred it in an especial manner on Leland."—(*Archæologia*, vol. i.) The adjective *antiquarian* is often used erroneously for *antiquary*.

CULTIVATION OF THE CLASSICS.

One of the educational errors of the day is a disparagement of the stores of Classic knowledge, "which have floated on the bosom of time, carrying riches and delight wherever they flow," and possessing great advantages over modern authorship. This is powerfully illustrated in the three following passages, one of which, it is worthy of remark, is from the great commercial as well as political organ of the day.

That literature which has stood the test of so many ages, and which, under all varieties of soil and climate, customs and manners, is found to contain something satisfactory and analogous to the best feelings of the mind, seems to have attained a sort of moral certainty in its truth and taste, which leaves no room for doubt or speculation. Hence, to the cultivators of ancient literature, there appears to belong somewhat of that conscious sense of security, and certainty, and enjoyments, which Adam Smith assumes to be peculiar to the cultivators of the exact sciences, the algebraist and geometrician.—*Quarterly Review*.

The Latin and Greek classics stand by far too deeply rooted in the minds of the great and good to be shaken "*arbitrio popularis auræ*," and from their beauty and merit alone, must ever remain identified with the literature of modern nations: on the mere ground of utility, as a branch of study, ten or twelve per cent of the English words in any ordinary book are to be directly traced therefrom; but surely the dead languages, instead of being taken merely for what they are worth, should be rather acknowledged and received by a civilised people as the elements of living tongues, and the earliest record of human intelligence illustrative of the gift of speech.—*Sir George Head's Home Tour*.

Years ago, Dr. Watts said all that could be said in reply to the arguments against Classical Learning, when he asked the use of a boy learning Latin who was intended for a soap-boiler. The answer is obvious; a school must teach something that will generally apply to the education of all, and leave the more particular education to be modified according to circumstances. To carry out the utilitarian scheme of accommodating education to the future profession of the scholar, every academy should be provided with its professors of soap-boiling, breeches-making, cork-cutting, &c. But even this would not succeed; for how many are the youths whom fortune turns from a profession they were in their earliest years destined to pursue, and whose education, if merely given with a view to that profession, would be entirely thrown away! How would the utilitarian youth, educated for a soap-boiler,

when his uncle, a rich tanner, bequeathed him his business, mourn that he had consumed his juvenile years in studying tallow and barilla ! As every literary work presumes some knowledge of classical allusions at least, can any substitute be found more generally useful ? As for commercial schools, a few years in a merchant's counting-house will throw every light on the mysteries of double-entry ; and it is a notorious fact, that persons who come from these commercial schools, assert that they have learned a system of book-keeping utterly unknown to any man of business, a number of barbarous handwritings, used only for the decoration of Christmas pieces, and a cumbrous arithmetic, which would excite a roar on 'Change. We are so heartily disgusted with an antipathy to that branch of learning in which our best and most distinguished men were educated—a familiarity with which will add so much to the relish for English and other modern literature (instead, as the utilitarians would have it, of operating as a bar)—that we cannot resist pointing out its fallacies wherever it may be found.—*Times Journal*.

In short, all experience shows how materially the taste and manners of a gentleman are improved by classical attainments ; and in the words of *The Saturday Review*, “that a classical education is the best that an Englishman can have.”

“ THE TALENTED.”

Coleridge has cleverly exposed the frequent use of “that vile and barbarous vocable—*talented*, which is stealing out of the newspapers into the leading Reviews and most respectable publications of the day. Why not *shillinged*, *farthinged*, *tenpenced*, &c. ? The formation of a participle passive from a noun is a license that nothing but a very peculiar felicity can excuse. If mere convenience is to justify such attempts upon the idiom, you cannot stop till the language becomes, in the most proper sense of the word, corrupt. Most of these pieces of slang come from America.” Carlyle attributes the introduction of “talented” to Mr. Daniel O’Connell.

WHAT IS GENIUS ?

Genius and talents are often confounded. “To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood ; to combine the child’s sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar,

With sun, and moon, and stars, throughout the year,
And man and woman,—

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talent. Genius must have talent as its compliment and implement, just as, in like manner, imagination must have fancy. In short, the higher intellectual powers can only act through a corresponding energy of the lower.”—*Coleridge*.

STYLE OF WRITING.

To say a person writes a good style is originally as pedantic an expression as to say he plays a good fiddle.—*Shenstone*.

“A LITTLE LEARNING IS A DANGEROUS THING.”

To this it has been replied: “A little learning is better than none at all.” In an *Exposition of Vulgar and Common Errors*, by Thomas Brown Redivivus, 2d edit. 1854, we find this correction of the fallacy:

“I know not whether when Mr. Pope wrote these words, he had himself felt that his small knowledge of Greek had betrayed him into some inaccuracies in his translation of *Homer*, and therefore he was in anger with his own ‘little learning;’ but this I do know, that the lines have been quoted largely to countenance an indolence that human nature is already too prone to, without the further aid of a popular poet. For, in good sooth, he that never beginneth can never end; and he who would have much learning, must begin his labours with a little; therefore I do hold this to be one of those fallacies which throw an obstacle in the way of improvement, and therefore ought to be removed from the path.”

BOOKS TO BE THROWN INTO THE FIRE.

One of the frequent errors of the day is the great indulgence in indiscriminate reading; and the pursuit of doubt which, in this age of free inquiry, is too apt to assume a materialistic tendency. The great multiplicity of books enjoins upon readers more correct choice of them; and in order to arrive at their value, Southey has left us this canon:

“Young readers, you whose hearts are open, whose understandings are not yet hardened, and whose feelings are neither exhausted nor encrusted with the world, take from me a better rule than any professors of criticism will teach you! Would you know whether the tendency of a book is good or evil, examine in what state of mind you lay it down. Has it induced you to suspect that what you have been accustomed to think unlawful may, after all, be innocent, and that may be harmless which you have hitherto been taught to think dangerous? Has it tended to make you dissatisfied and impatient under the control of others? and disposed you to relax in that self-government without which both the laws of God and man tell us there can be no virtue, and consequently no happiness? Has it attempted to abate your admiration and reverence for what is great and good, and to diminish in you a love of your country and of your fellow-creatures? Has it addressed itself to your pride, your vanity, your selfishness, or any of your evil propensities? Has it defiled the imagination with what is loathsome, and shocked the heart with what is monstrous? Has it disturbed the sense of right and wrong which the Creator has implanted in the human soul? If so—if you have felt that such were the effects it was intended to produce—throw the book into the fire, whatever name it may bear upon the title-page! Throw it in the fire, young man, though it should have been the gift of a friend; young lady, away with the whole set, though it should be the prominent furniture in the rosewood-bookcase.”

Science, Art, and Invention.

MYTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE.

M. ARAGO, in his brilliant *éloge* of Fourier, observes :

“The ancients had a taste, or rather a passion, for the marvellous, which made them forget the sacred ties of gratitude. Look at them, for instance, collecting into one single group the high deeds of a great number of heroes, whose names they have not even deigned to preserve, and attributing them all to Hercules alone. The lapse of centuries has not made us wiser. The public in our times also delight in mingling fiction with history. In all careers, particularly in that of the sciences, there is a desire to create Herculesees. According to the vulgar opinion, every astronomical discovery is attributable to Herschel. The theory of the motions of the planets is identified with the name of Laplace ; and scarcely any credit is allowed to the important labours of D'Alembert, Clairaut, Euler, and Lagrange. Watt is the sole inventor of the steam-engine ; whilst Chaptal has enriched the chemical arts with all those ingenious and productive processes which secure their prosperity.” To countervail this error, Arago continues : “Let us hold up to legitimate admiration those chosen men whom nature has endowed with the valuable faculty of grouping together isolated facts, and deducing beautiful theories from them ; but do not let us forget that the sickle of the reaper must cut down the stalks of corn, before any one can think of collecting them into sheaves.”

FALLACIES OF FIRST EXPERIMENTS.

It is a frequent error with some experimenters, with unfortunate precipitancy, to dignify as general laws the consequences which result from their first experiments. Sometimes we have only to take up an instrument, and use it in some research, in order to stumble upon some new fact. But in prosecuting the work with becoming assiduity, in varying our modes of experimenting, and in analysing the phenomena in different aspects, it will most generally be found, either that the novelty is only apparent, and that the true explanation may be found among the already established truths of science ; or if, on the other hand, it turns out to be a real discovery, it will almost invariably contradict those alleged general laws which first of all presented themselves to our minds with so much apparent certainty and clearness.—*Melloni*.

PERPETUAL MOTION SEEKERS.

What an infinity of vain schemes for Perpetual Motion, and new mechanical engines of power, &c., would have been checked

at once, had the great truth been generally understood, that no form or combination of machinery ever did or ever can increase, in the slightest degree, the quantity of power applied! Ignorance of this is the hinge on which most of the dreams of mechanical projectors have turned. The frequency, and eagerness, and obstinacy, with which even talented (!) individuals, owing to their imperfect knowledge of this part of natural philosophy, have engaged in such undertakings, is a remarkable phenomenon in human nature.—*Melloni*.

The term *Perpetual Motion* is used to convey the notion of a motive machine, the initial force of which is restored by the motion produced by itself,—a clock, so to speak, which winds itself up by its own wheels and pendulum, a pump which keeps itself going by the weight of the water which it has raised. Another notion, arising from a confusion between static and dynamic forces, is, that the motion may be obtained without transferring force, as by a permanent magnet. All sound philosophers are of opinion that such effects are impossible; the work done by a given force, even assuming there are no such things as friction, aerial resistance, &c., could never be more than equal to the initial force; the theoretical limit is equilibrium. The weight raised at one end of a lever can never, without the fresh application of extraneous force, raise the opposite weight which has produced its own elevation. A force can only produce motion when the resistance to it is less powerful than itself; if equal, it is equilibrium: thus, if motion be produced, the resistance, being less than the initial or producing force, cannot reproduce this; for then the weaker would conquer the stronger force.—*W. R. Grove, F.R.S.*

TRANSMUTATION OF METALS.

In the ridicule which has been thrown around the labours of the alchemists, the fact that they possessed a certain portion of useful knowledge has been lost sight of, as well as the disadvantages of their practice; for the secrecy which the alchemists affected repelled improvement, and almost every discovery died with its inventor. Mr. Brande observes:

“The Transmutation of baser Metals into gold and silver, which was the chief, and in most cases the only, object of the genuine alchemists, was not merely regarded as possible, but believed to have been performed, by some of the more enlightened chemists of the seventeenth century. And before we treat this belief with ridicule, we should consider the slender means then existing for the detection of the delusive errors of alchemy. Thus, in perusing the history of these transmutations, as recorded by Helvetius, Boerhaave, Boyle, and other sober-minded men, it would be difficult to resist the evidence adduced without the aids of modern science.”

BENEFITS OF ASTROLOGY.

In former ages the influence of Astrology over an individual often added to his energy. As such, it may have been a beneficial fallacy. No great undertaking, perhaps no good one, was

ever accomplished but by him who firmly felt that he was called upon and named to accomplish the task. A philosopher of France has told us that modern science earns its chief honours by dispelling this enthusiasm.

"Astronomy," he observes, "is the proudest monument of the human mind, and the noblest evidence of its powers. Equally deceived by the imperfections of his senses and the illusions of self-love, man long considered himself to be the centre of the movements of the stars. And his vanity has been punished by the terrors to which they have given rise. At length ages of labour removed the veil which concealed the system of the world from him. He then found himself placed on the surface of a planet so small as to be scarcely perceptible in that solar system which itself is but a point in the infinity of space. The sublime results to which his discoveries have conducted him, are fit to console him for the rank which they assign to the earth. Therefore we should employ every endeavour to preserve and increase these exalted sources of knowledge, the delight of all thinking beings. They have rendered important services to navigation and geography; but the greatest of all benefits which they have conferred upon society must be found in the removal of the fears excited by the celestial phenomena, and the confutation of errors created by our ignorance of the true relations which we bear to nature."—*Laplace*.

Whilst we condemn Astrology, or the pretended art of predicting future events from the positions of the stars and planets, we do not fully estimate the benefits of the delusion in its becoming the basis of astronomy. Many of the earliest treatises on astrology have scarcely a symptom of the perversion of science. The oriental observers gave the method of determining the rising of the sun, of taking the altitude of the sun, and of drawing the meridian line: they enabled the student to solve all the practical problems of astronomy. In the intellectual genealogy of man they may claim to be the progenitors of Kepler and of Newton; and the calculations of the Alfonsines (the disciples of "Alfonso the Wise," a celebrated astrologer of the 13th century) are the remote but efficient causes of the perfection of modern astronomy. Thus "delusion became the basis of truth. Horoscopes and nativities have taught us to trace the planet in its sure and silent path; and the acquirements which of all others testify the might of the human intellect, derived their origin from weakness and credulity."—*Quarterly Review*.

ALL ASTROLOGERS NOT IMPOSTORS.

Certain Astrologers were not impostors, as they are often described by the hasty or the ignorant. Partridge, who was severely bantered by Swift, was not the impostor that the Dean would make him appear. "Partridge," says an acute and original writer, "believed *sincerely* that the stars were indices of fate; and he wrote and acted in that belief, however much he may have been deceived by appearances. He found, as all students in astrology find, that every horoscope enabled him to foretell a certain number of events; and if his prognostics failed in some cases, he ascribed the failure to no defect of his celestial intelligences, but to the errors or short-sightedness of his art."—*Sir Richard Phillips: Walk to Kew*.

PRODIGIES OF THE DIAMOND.

The notions of the ancients about the Diamond were confused and indistinct. It was sometimes considered a talisman, and when under the planet Mars, esteemed favourable. It was supposed to cure insanity, and to be an antidote to poisons; notwithstanding which, Paracelsus was said to have been poisoned by diamond-powder; though it is believed to be as inert in the one case as it is harmless in the other. The Greeks called this gem "unconquerable;" and the name of "Adamant" was given to it in consequence of this supposititious virtue, in that it was esteemed victorious over fire, and capable of resisting the hardest substances. Ancient Greek writers describe the diamond as only found in Ethiopia, between the island Meroe and the temple of Mercury. According to Pliny, there existed between the diamond and the magnet a natural antipathy: "there is," he says, "such a disagreement between a diamond and a loadstone, that it will not suffer the iron to be attracted; or, if the loadstone be put to it, and take hold of it, it will pull it away."—(*Pliny*, lib. 37, chap. 4.) It is needless to observe, that no such antipathy can now be discovered in the case. "We, at least," states Mr. John Murray, "have found no diminution of the attractive powers of the magnet, when we interposed between a magnet and a fine needle no less than five fragments of diamond." We are told that a diamond is softened and broken if steeped in the blood of a goat; but not, according to others, unless it be fresh and warm, nor even then fractured without blows; and that it will also break the best hammers and anvils of iron. Sir Thomas Browne says, that a diamond being steeped in goat's blood rather receives thereby an increase of hardness: "for," he observes, "the best we have are comminable without it, and are so far from breaking hammers, that they submit to pistillation and resist not an ordinary pestle." The truth is, as far as the goat's blood is concerned, it makes no difference either way, as was proved long ago by Roger Bacon; and we know very well that it is a matter of no difficulty to crush the diamond in a steel mortar; from its lamellar texture it is also capable of being split and cleaved, and jewellers are by these means enabled to work it.—*Murray on the Diamond.*

It is, therefore, altogether an error to suppose that diamonds will not wear out. In the shops of wholesale glaziers, where the diamond is in constant use, one of these instruments is worn down in a month or six weeks, so as to require resetting; after which, with the same wear, it usually lasts another month, and then becomes useless. It may, however, be presumed that diamonds travel over some miles of glass before they are worn

out. It is likewise a singular and interesting fact, that the natural point only of the diamond will cut, whilst that obtained by polishing will not cut glass.

It has also been stated, that the diamond was able to resist the power of the highest temperature; but it has yielded to the "torture and inquisition of modern chemistry," and its combustibility has been completely ascertained; so that a diamond may be easily consumed by being placed in a cavity of charcoal, and urging on it the flame of a spirit-lamp by means of a stream of oxygen.

"Artificial diamonds" are among the scientific curiosities of our day; and, experiment having demonstrated the diamond to be pure crystallised carbon, some approximation has been made to the natural gem by acting with a powerful galvanic battery on charcoal in vacuo, when minute hard crystals were said to be formed round the superior wire. It has also been stated in France, that a solution of phosphorus in sulphuret of carbon yields minute diamonds. Both these processes have, however, proved unsatisfactory.

We read marvellous records (in modern books too) of the high prices realised for Diamonds; but, according to Dr. Ure, "it does not appear that any sum exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand pounds has ever been given for a diamond." On July 20, 1837, was sold, in London, the celebrated Nassuck Diamond, as large as a good-sized walnut, weighing $357\frac{1}{2}$ grains, of dazzling whiteness, and as pure as a drop of dew; when this magnificent gem, though estimated by the East India Company to be worth 30,000*l.*, realised only 7,200*l.*, or less than one-fourth of its reputed value.

For other illustrations of the history and economy of the Diamond, see *Things not generally Known*, pp. 200-202.

INVENTION OF THE DIVING-BELL.

In the United States of America generally, and to some extent in England, the Invention of the Diving-bell has been attributed to Sir William Phipps; who was, however, one of the first persons who used the Bell advantageously, in recovering nearly 300,000*l.* treasure from a Spanish wreck, near the Bahamas. The *invention*, or the earliest use, of the diving-bell, was upwards of a century before the birth of Phipps; the first instance of its use being at Cadiz, in the presence of Charles V., in 1538, whereas Phipps was born at Pemaguid, in America, in 1650. There is likewise a popular American opinion, that the Mulgrave family, of which the present head is the Marquess of Normanby, is descended from Sir William Phipps, which is a mistake; the founder of the Mulgrave family being Phipps, one of the earliest explorers of the Arctic regions.

Notwithstanding the great improvements made in diving-bells since their invention, we agree with Sir George Head in his *Home Tour*, that, after all precautions, a man in a diving-bell is certainly in a state of awful dependence upon human aid: in case of the slightest accident to the air-pump, even a single stitch of the leathern hose giving way, long before that ponderous vessel could be raised to the surface of the water life must be extinct.

THE ORRERY.

The invention of this machine is often erroneously attributed to the Earl of Orrery, from its being named after his lordship. The origin of the term is thus given by M. Desaguliers, in his *Course of Experimental Philosophy*, 4to, London, 1734, i. p. 431. After stating his belief that Mr. George Graham, about the year 1700, first invented a movement for exhibiting the motion of the earth about the sun at the same time that the moon revolved about the earth, he remarks:

“This machine being in the hands of the instrument-maker, to be sent with some of his own instruments to Prince Eugene, he copied it, and made the first for the late Earl of Orrery, and then several others with additions of his own. Sir Richard Steele, who knew nothing of Mr. Graham’s machine, in one of his lucubrations, thinking to do justice to the first encourager, as well as to the inventor of such a curious instrument, called it an orrery, and gave Mr. Rowley the praise due to Mr. Graham.”

IMPERFECTIONS OF THE COMMON WATCH.

The common Watch is, in many of its parts, a very ill-contrived machine. The train of wheelwork which transmits the motion of the main-spring, for example, is contrived on principles so faulty, that they would be scouted by every practised mechanic. Yet there can be no doubt that any attempt to introduce a better machine would utterly fail as a commercial enterprise. Long-used methods and ingenious engines have been specially provided to fashion and cut every one of the minuter parts which go to compose the existing instrument. The late Mr. Dent stated, in a lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, that every watch consisted of at least 202 pieces, employing probably 215 persons, distributed among 40 trades, to say nothing of the tool-makers for all of these. If we were now materially to alter the construction of the watch, all those trades would have to be re-learned, new tools and wheel-cutting engines to be devised, and the majority of the workmen to begin life again. During this interval, the price of the new instrument would be enormously enhanced. We should again hear men speak, like Malvolio, of “winding-up their watches” as a token of magnificent wealth. Thus, in our complicated

state of society, even machines in the process of time come to surround themselves with a circle of "vested interests" which embarrass all our attempts at improvement." — *Edinburgh Review*, 1849.

BELLS IN CHURCHES.

Spelman states that Bells were first introduced into churches about A.D. 400, by Paulinus bishop of Nola, and were thence called *Nolæ*. Bingham (*Works*, vol. i. p. 16) considers this a vulgar error. Bentham (*Hist. Ely, Supp. by Stephenson*, p. 150) remarks, that the earliest use of campanæ (bells) was about 605, when Pope Sabinianus ordered some to be fixed in churches. Bede mentions them as early as 608.

The reason is not generally known, but church-bells have a sensible effect on the ear according as they are more or less perfectly tuned. No set of bells is ever cast quite in tune; in general the third is too *flat*, and the fourth is too *sharp*, the effect of which is doubly discordant. The only certain mode of having a peal perfectly harmonious, is to tune the bells by a monochord divided into intervals. A peal of bells can be thus brought to musical perfection; and any one, without knowing the reason, would perceive the sweet effect. This mode of after-tuning is never practised; and therefore a peal gives all its discord often for centuries, as the bells happen to be cast.

Webster libelled the most exhilarating and the most affecting of all measured sounds, when he said

"Those flattering bells have all
One sound, at weddings and at funerals."

SILVER IN BELLS.

A prejudice has long existed, that the old church-bells contained a smaller or larger portion of silver; and the large bell of Rouen cathedral was, from its beautiful sounds, called the *Silver Bell*. It was broken up, and melted into cannon, in the first French Revolution; and M. Girardin has, by a careful analysis, ascertained that this Rouen bell had not a trace of silver in it. One hundred parts of it by weight contained—

Copper	.	.	.	.	71
Brass	.	.	.	.	26
Zinc	.	.	.	.	1 . 80
Iron	.	.	.	.	1 . 20

Modern French bells differ little from the above, being composed of

Copper	.	.	.	.	78
Brass	.	.	.	.	22

Mr. E. Beckett Denison, in his account of the great bell of Westminster, says that Silver is "a purely poetical and not a chemical

ingredient of any known bell-metal; and that there is no foundation whatever for the vulgar notion that it was used in old bells, nor the least reason to believe that it would do any good. I happened to hear," adds Mr. Denison, "of an instance where it had been tried by a gentleman who had put his own silver into the pot at the bell-foundry some years ago. I wrote to him to inquire about it, and he could not say that he remembered any particular effect. This seemed to me to be quite enough to settle that question. You may easily see for yourselves that a silver cup makes a rather worse bell than a cast-iron saucepan."

NOAH'S ARK.

There is much difference of opinion about the form of the Ark "made" by Noah previous to the Flood. The common figures are given under the impression that it was intended to be adapted to progressive motion; whereas no other object was sought than to construct a vessel which should float for a given time upon the water. For this purpose, it was not necessary to place the ark in a sort of boat, as in the common figures; and we may be content with the simple idea which the text gives, namely, that of an enormous oblong box, or wooden house, divided into three stories, apparently with a sloping roof. Indeed, Noah's ark was so named from its supposed resemblance to an ark or chest; by which name it occurs both in the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon versions of the passage in Luke xvii. 27. Wiclif, in this passage, instead of ark, reads *ship*; and hence may have arisen the popular error of representing Noah's Ark in the form of a huge boat or vessel. In the north of England, to the present day, the word ark is used for the chest which is employed for containing meal.

How few readers are aware of the identity of the dimensions of Noah's house upon the waters with those of certain stupendous steam-ships built in our day to plough the Atlantic Ocean! Yet such is shown in a volume by W. Radford, R. N., entitled, *On the Construction of the Ark, as adapted to the Naval Architecture of the Present Day*.

"How strange," says the author, "that for a period of four thousand years and upwards men should have gone on, each in his own way, when positive proofs and directions are plainly and forcibly laid down by the Almighty Himself, in language and terms intelligible to the meanest capacity,—in language so plain and forcible, that the greatest sceptic cannot attempt to dispute it, either by subtracting from it, or adding to it! For this is the plain and forcible passage of the Holy Writ, in the sixth chapter of the book of Genesis and the fifteenth verse:—'And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: the length of the Ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.' This passage of Holy Writ is very remarkable, and has always engaged the attention of scientific men; more particularly so, when in working out the tonnage of the ark, as therein laid down, both by arithmetic and logarithms, the amount of burthen in tonnage is precisely the same. But this passage

has lately received an additional stimulus, as well as a striking proof of its correct and true principle in ship-building, through the instrumentality of those two splendid vessels, the *Great Western* and the *British Queen*; the proportional part of these ships being precisely the same as those laid down for the construction of the ark."

The following is a comparison between the size of Noah's Ark and the Great Eastern steam-ship, both being considered in point of tonnage after the old law for calculating the tonnage.

The sacred "cubit," as stated by Sir Isaac Newton, is 20·625 English inches; by Bishop Wilkins, at 21·88 inches. According to these authorities, the dimensions will be as follows:

	Sir I. Newton. English Feet.	Bishop Wilkins. English Feet.	Great Eastern. English Feet.
Length between perpendiculars	515·62	547·0	680·0
Breadth	85·94	91·16	83·0
Depth	51·56	54·70	60·0
Keel, or length for tonnage	464·08	492·31	630·2
Tonnage according to old law	18,231 58-94	21,761 50-94	23,092 25-94

Communicated to the Times Journal, April 13, 1857.

WHO INVENTED THE MARINER'S COMPASS?

Flavio Gioja, a Neapolitan, is the popular reply, but on no satisfactory evidence; and when it was discovered that the Chinese and Arabian authors had spoken of the polarity of the magnet before the fourteenth century, it began to be suspected that the Neapolitan was merely the introducer of the compass into Europe. M. Klaproth has, however, proved the Chinese claim to the invention in their magnetic chariot, the origin of which is lost in the obscurity of mythological ages.

The power of magnetism, and the polarity of the magnetic needle, appear to have been known to the Chinese from the most remote antiquity. Extracted from the annals of See-ma-thsian, a Chinese historian contemporary with the destruction of the Bactrian empire by Mithridates I., we find the following extraordinary relation: "The Emperor Tchingwang (1110 years before our era) presented to the ambassadors of Tong-king and Cochin-China, who dreaded the loss of their way back to their own country, five magnetic cars, which pointed out the south by means of the moving arm of a little figure covered with a vest of feathers." To each of these cars too a hodometer, marking the distances traversed by strokes on a bell, was attached, so as to establish a complete dead reckoning.—(*Humboldt, Asie Centrale*, xli.; *Kosmos*, 171.) Such inventions, we cannot but observe, are not the creation of a few years, or a few generations. They presuppose long centuries of previous civilisation, and that too "at an epoch contemporary with Codrus and the return of the Heraclides to the Peloponnesus"—the obscure dawn of European history! Even the declination of the needle, or its deviation from the true meridian, was known to this extraordinary people at the epoch in question.—*Sir John Herschel.*

DECAY OF IRON RAILINGS.

Every one must have observed the destructive combination of lead and iron from railings being fixed in stone with the former metal, and the oxygen of the atmosphere keeping up the galvanic action between the two metals. This waste might be prevented by substituting zinc for lead, in which case the galvanic influence would be inverted: the whole of its action would fall on the zinc, and the iron would be preserved; and as zinc is oxidated with difficulty, it would, at the same time, be scarcely acted on; the one remaining uninjured, and the other nearly so. Paint formed of the oxide of zinc, for the same reason, preserves iron exposed to the atmosphere infinitely better than the ordinary paint, which is composed of oxide of lead.

ORIGIN OF THE JEWS' HARP.

This name is a corruption of the French *Jeu-trompe*, literally a toy-trumpet. It is called *Jeu-trompe* by Bacon, *Jeu-trump* by Beaumont and Fletcher, and *Jew's-harp* by Hackluyt. Another etymon is *Jaw's-harp*, because the place where it is played upon is between the jaws.—(*Dr. Rimbault, Notes and Queries*, No. 18.) It has therefore nothing to do with the Jews specially, or their music, notwithstanding Dr. Littleton's learned rendering by *Sistrum Judaicum*.

THE FIRST PAPER-MILL IN ENGLAND.

The first Paper-Mill erected in England is commonly attributed to Sir John Spielman, a German, who established one in 1588 at Dartford, for which the honour of knighthood was afterwards conferred upon him by Queen Elizabeth, who was also pleased to grant him a license "for the sole gathering for ten years of all rags, &c., necessary for the making of such paper." It is, however, quite certain that paper-mills were in existence here long before Spielman's time. Shakespeare, in the second part of his play of *Henry the Sixth*, the plot of which appears laid at least a century previously, refers to a paper-mill. In fact, he introduces it as an additional weight to the charge which Jack Cade is made to bring against Lord Say. "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted," says he, "the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and whereas before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used, and, contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou has built a paper-mill."—*Herring's Paper-Making, Ancient and Modern*.

THE FIRST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER.

"The earliest English Newspaper" was long believed to be that contained in the collection in the British Museum, and

entitled *The English Mercurie*, which, by authority, "was printed at London in 1558, and gave an account of the Spanish Armada in the British Channel." This statement by Chalmers, in his *Life of Ruddiman*, was put forth in 1794, and was thence copied into encyclopædias, magazines, class-books for schools, and innumerable volumes of anecdotes; till an accidental reference to the accredited newspaper proved the whole story to be an imposition of the grossest nature; and the error, which had passed current for nearly half a century, was thus exploded.

The details of the discovery afford a valuable lesson to the worshippers of the rarities of literature. It appears that on Nov. 4, 1839, Mr. Watts, of the British Museum, having occasion to refer to *The English Mercurie* upon some point respecting the Spanish Armada, and the book being brought, he had not examined it two minutes before he was forced to conclude the whole to be a forgery. Passing over several minor circumstances, the conviction of the forgery rests principally on the following evidence:

1. The type employed is not that of the period, but that of a century ago; the distinction between the u, v, and i, and j, which are shown in *The Mercurie*, being utterly unknown to printers of the sixteenth century.

2. The orthography is almost always at variance with an accredited work entitled *A Pack of Spanish Lies*, printed in 1588. In this work, for example, is spelt "Arke Royalle," but in *The Mercurie* it is "Ark Royal."

3. The style of the composition is not of the date to which it pretends. Words, phrases, and modes of expression are made use of, which were either unknown at the time, or were employed in a sense which did not become familiar to English ears until a period much later than the date of *The Mercurie*.

4. Mr. Watts is of opinion that an article of news in *The Mercurie* of July 23d, 1588, purporting to give an account, written by the lord admiral, of events of which we now possess a most minute relation, could only be the work of a newspaper-manufacturer copying from a confused statement of the same events by Camden.

5. There is a hiatus of nearly four months between Nos. 53 and 54 of *The Mercurie*, although four of the numbers were published within eight days.

6. The manuscript copies of *The Mercurie*, which are bound up with the printed copies, contain "the most convincing, the most irrefragable, evidence that the whole affair is a fraud." The handwriting of the manuscript is as modern as the type of the printed copies, and the spelling is also modern; while in the printed copies the printer has endeavoured to give the spelling "the proper antique flavour," and has not succeeded

very well. Moreover, the paper bears the water-mark of the royal arms, with the initials "G. R."*

The question, "Who was the forger?" remains to be answered. Mr. Watts thinks that the printed and manuscript copies were got up for the purpose of imposition, that the attempt was detected, and that the whole of the papers were preserved as a memorial of the occurrence. If this be the case, surely some account of the transaction would have been preserved. We rather incline to the belief that the forgery had never before been detected, and had been inadvertently admitted as genuine. *The Mercurie* is in the collection of Dr. Birch, by whom it was bequeathed to the British Museum in 1766; in all probability, the doctor had been imposed on by some accomplished literary forger.

The earliest printed London Newspaper is the *Weekly Newes*, May 23, 1622, by Nathaniel Butter.

"DUTCH" CLOCKS.

The wooden Clocks, which we erroneously call "Dutch," are nearly all made in the Black Forest, and are, in fact, German clocks. The village of Freyburg is the centre of this manufacture, whence wooden clocks are exported, "to the number, it is said, of 180,000 yearly, under the name of *Dutch Clocks*, not only throughout Europe, but even to America and China." Yet Shakspeare, with his wonted accuracy (*Love's Labour Lost*, act iii. scene 1), calls these clocks rightly, thus:

"A woman that is like a German clock,
Still a repairing; ever out of frame;
And never going aright."

"SALLET-OIL."

Persons generally imagine this term to be a vulgar corruption of "Salad-Oil," whereas it applies to a different kind of oil to that used in salads. The truth is, the *sallet* was the head-piece in the times that defensive armour was so much in use, and the sallet-oil was that sort of oil which was used for cleaning and brightening it. Thus we have "a sallet and ij sculles" in the inventory of Mr. Lawrence, Rector of Stawely, co. Derby. The word occurs again in an inventory, anno 1581; and also in the description of the sarcastical coat of Cardinal Wolsey:

"Arise up Jacke, and put on thy salatt."

We see, therefore, that the oil retained the name long after the sallet was out of use.

* These details have been abridged from a Letter, addressed by Mr. Watts to Mr. Panizzi, of the British Museum. It is but justice to add, that the genuineness of the *English Mercurie* had been previously much questioned in the *Penny Cyclopædia*, art. Newspapers.

THE FIDDLE AND CAT-GUT.

The idea that the viscera of the cat are employed for violin-strings is altogether an Error. In the old copy of Shakspeare's *Cymbeline* occurs "horse-hairs and calves'-guts," which Rowe changed to cats'-guts; and he has since been followed. Upon which the editor of the *Pictorial Shakspeare* notes: "We believe that there is not an example of it in any old author. In Bacon's *Natural History* we have a passage in which *gut*, a musical string made of animal substance, is thus spoken of: 'A viol should have a lay of wire-strings below, close to the belly, and the strings of *guts* mounted upon a bridge.' Why not, then, *calves'* guts as well as *cats'* guts? We know not how the name *catgut* arose; for *cats* have as little to do with the production of such strings as mice have." To this fancied association of the cat and strings of the violin, some imaginative persons have referred the sign of the *Cat and the Fiddle*, which so puzzled the *Spectator*. Another attributes it to a zealous Protestant innkeeper, who having survived the iron yoke of Mary, in the days of her successor likened himself to the old Roman, and wrote over his door, "*l'Hostelle du Caton Fidelle*," afterwards corrupted to the Cat and Fiddle. A third etymologist traces it to the custom of a cat being shown about the streets dancing to a fiddle; and he refers to an old book, entitled *Twists and Turns about the Streets of London*, wherein is described "a poor half-naked boy strumming on his violin, while another little urchin was, with the help of a whip, making two poor starved cats go through numerous feats of agility."

USE OF STIRRUPS.

Because no stirrups appear on the ancient equestrian monuments, antiquaries conclude that so simple a contrivance was unknown to the Romans. But we should consider how much of the real costume of the time was suppressed by sculptors; how generally the ancient vases, coins, lamps, reliefs, nay, even triumphal arches, represent chariot-horses without even yoke or traces; how seldom the saddles, or rather *ephippia*, appear on statues (the spurs and horse-shoes never); how greatly the stirrups would detract from the freedom and grace of an equestrian figure. Besides, something like one stirrup does appear on an antique at the Vatican. — *Note in Forsyth's Italy.*

"SAXON ARCHITECTURE."

There is a very common error of attributing the erection of buildings with massive columns and semi-circular arches to the Saxons. "According to the best authorities, there are very

few specimens of architecture now in existence in this country which can properly be called Saxon, that is, of a date anterior to the Conquest, and not of Roman origin; and those few are of the rudest and most inferior description. Saxon, therefore, as far as the architecture of this country is concerned, is an improper term." (*Hoskins, Ency. Brit.* 7th edit.) The more proper term for the style is Anglo-Norman.

THE TERM RELIEVO.

This term, improperly spelt *Relievo*, as applied to sculpture, signifies the representation of any object projecting or standing forth from the plane on, and commonly out of, which it is formed. Of relievos there are three kinds—*basso*, *mezzo*, and *alto*: the first is, when the projection is less than one-half of the natural thickness, such as is seen on coins or medals; the second, when one-half of the figure emerges; the third, when the figure is so completely salient, that it adheres to the plane only by the narrow strip.

STYLE OF LOUIS QUATORZE.

A style of ornament is now fostered to a great extent, and is erroneously termed that of Louis XIV., but which, in fact, is the debased manner of the reign of his successor, in which grotesque varieties are substituted for classic design. It is, in truth, what the French call the style of Louis XV. The best style of Louis XIV. is the Roman and Italian styles made more sumptuous; but the moment that the grotesque scroll, so common in the reign of Louis XV., was introduced, it interrupted the chasteness of the Roman style.—*Mr. J. B. Papworth, before the Parliamentary Committee on Arts and Manufactures.*

ANCIENT GLASS-PAINTING.

Glass-painting has fallen almost to the level of china-painting; but it might be greatly superior now to what it was in ancient times. There is an ignorant opinion among people that the ancient art of glass-painting is completely lost: it is totally void of foundation, for we can carry it to a much higher pitch than the ancients, except in one particular colour, and we come very near to that. We can blend the colours, and produce the effects of light and shadow, which they could not do, by harmonising and mixing the colours in such a manner, and fixing by proper enamelling and burning them, that they shall afterwards become just as permanent as those of the ancients, with the additional advantage of throwing in superior art.* Under patronage, and with the advance of chemis-

* Evidence of Mr. John Martin, the historical painter, before Parliament. Mr. Martin was in early life a painter on glass.

try, we could achieve the above triumphs; but the past will blind us to the advantages which we possess in our own times.

CHESTNUT AND OAK ROOFS.

A mistake has been made, both in England and on the Continent, in supposing that the woodwork of Westminster Hall, and that of the roofs of many of the oldest of the continental churches, are of the sweet chestnut, and not of oak. The fact is, that there are two, if not three, distinct kinds of British oak. The two which are clearly distinct are the *quercus robur pedunculata*, and *quercus robur sessiflora*; and the differences between these are found alike in every soil and situation. The third, or deer-mast oak, is not so strongly marked; and in many situations it appears to approach so nearly to the *quercus robur sessiflora*, as to be scarcely distinguishable from it. The wood of the *quercus robur sessiflora*, though not suitable for ship-building, as it decays in salt water, is yet very strong and durable when kept dry. The wood of the *quercus robur pedunculata*, when planed, is found to contain a large proportion of the silver grain or medullary rays, which the workmen call the flower in the wood. The wood of the *quercus sessiflora*, on the contrary, is so deficient in this, as not to be distinguishable at first sight from the chestnut; and hence the mistake alluded to. The wood of the chestnut, however, though tough and tolerably durable when young, is not at all so when it has attained the size of a timber-tree. It is, indeed, very rare to meet with any chestnut-trees, the trunks of which are above a foot in diameter, that have not their wood rendered quite worthless by a disease called dialling.—*Loudon's Arboretum et Fructicetum Britannicum*.

DURABILITY OF BRICKS.

An impression exists in reference to the want of Durability in Bricks, as a building-material, of the correctness of which a little reflection will convince us there is some doubt, provided they be properly made. So far from being the most perishable, they are the most durable substance; and the bricks of Nineveh and Babylon in our museums show that they were selected by the ancients as the most lasting material. Plutarch thinks them superior in durability to stone, if properly prepared; and it is admitted that the baths of Caracalla, those of Titus, and the Thermæ of Dioclesian, have withstood the effects of time and the fire better than the stone of the Coliseum, or the marble of the Forum of Trajan; yet the bricks of Nineveh and Babylon (and we believe those of the Romans also) were only sun-dried—not baked or burned, as the modern practice is.

GLAZED WINDOWS.

The invention of Glass Windows is referred to by Mr. Hallam (*Hist. Mid. Ages*, vol. iii. p. 424) as an essential improvement in the architecture of the Middle Ages, which had been "missed by the sagacity of Greece and Rome." Mr. Hallam then passes to the introduction of glazed windows from France into some new churches in England, in the seventh century; and concludes that glass was not employed in our houses before the fourteenth century. "Nor indeed did it come into general use during the period of the Middle Ages. Glazed windows were considered as movable furniture, and probably bore a high price. When the earls of Northumberland, as late as the reign of Elizabeth, left Alnwick Castle, the windows were taken out of their frames and carefully laid by."*

These statements have long been received as facts in proof of the comparatively modern use of glass in windows; whereas the discoveries of our times have proved them to be erroneous. "That the ancients were acquainted with the use of glass windows is sufficiently proved by the quantity of flat glass discovered during the excavations; and also by its having been found ingeniously fitted to those rare and minute openings which were dignified with the name and office of windows in Pompeii."—*Pompeii (Lib. Ent. Knowledge)*, vol. i. p. 119.

That the Romans had also glazed windows in their buildings in Britain, may be reasonably inferred from the discovery of glass in some of their stations: as at *Camalodunum* (Colchester), *Aquis Solis* (Bath), &c.† Indeed, Pennant is of opinion that glass-making dates prior to the Roman invasion; and glass is stated by St. Jerome to have been used to form windows in his time (A.D. 422), at which period the Romans quitted England. Hence we may conclude the art to have been lost in this country; and the periods usually referred to as the dates of its invention, to be those of its revival.

SPURIOUS GILDING.

Much of this work is executed without a particle of gold, but it speedily becomes tarnished and discoloured. The cheap gilding of picture and looking-glass frames is thus executed, and consequently is liable to these defects; wherefore it is false economy to employ any but gold leaf.

The common "gilding" metal is copper beaten out into very thin plates, and afterwards rendered yellow like gold by exposing them to the fumes of zinc without any real mixture of

* *Northumberland Household-Book*, preface, p. xvi. Bishop Percy says, on the authority of Harrison, that Glass was not commonly used in the reign of Henry VIII.

† See *Curiosities of History*, by the author of the present volume, p. 113.

it in the metal. Gingerbread toys for children are mostly covered with this spurious metal; they are therefore poisonous, and should be forbidden.

In few situations is the excellence of fine gilding more severely tested than on the points of public buildings, exposed as they are constantly to the weather. They are mostly doubly or triply gilt. Thus the apex of the London Monument is triply gilt, at the cost of 120*l*. The gilding of the Queen's state-carriage is also triple, and cost 933*l*. 14*s*. 6*d*., exclusive of the carving, which cost 2504*l*.

JEWELLERS' GOLD.

This is by no means so definite a term as is generally supposed: it may either mean gold of half-standard purity; an alloy of copper, gilt; or a fine yellow composition metal, consisting of copper and zinc in about equal proportions. One or more of these alloys is named "Birmingham gold." Nor must the dark colour of gold articles be taken as a standard of purity; for this appearance is obtained by dipping the articles in a solution of copper.

Foreigners are astonished, and with good reason, that the English government permits the sale of that nondescript substitute for gold called "Jewellers' Gold," which does not even stand the ordeal of aquafortis. It will rarely be taken even in exchange for similar articles abroad, where it is called "English compound."

Mosaic Gold is an alloy which does not contain a particle of gold, as its name implies, it being merely tin and sulphur.

The imitation of gold sold with the taking name of Petit-Or is nothing more than the alloy formerly called Pinch-beck, which is made by melting zinc in a certain proportion with copper and brass, so as in colour to approach that of gold.

WHAT IS TUTENAGUE?

The exact nature of Tutenague is still a problem. Some state that tutenague is a name given by the Chinese to zinc; others consider it to be an artificial mixture of different metals; while the tutenague, which was formerly exported from the East Indies, is pure zinc, without any alloy of lead. M. de Guignes affirms, that it is a native mixture of lead and iron, peculiar to China. It has frequently been confounded with the white copper of China, which is of a different composition, and not allowed to be carried out of the empire. Upon the authority of a merchant trading between India and China, tutenague was an article of very extensive commerce between those countries until the year 1820, when it was superseded by the introduction of German spelter into India.

THE GERMAN SILVER

has been introduced, as its name denotes, by the Germans into Europe; but it is nothing more than the white copper long known in China. It does not contain a single particle of real silver; for it is only an alloy of copper, nickel, and zinc. Many years before it had got into general use in England, it had been no novelty to the manufactories of Birmingham.

TOWN-MADE CUTLERY.

The mercantile part of the Sheffield trade is performed chiefly by travellers, but the principal shops in London deal directly with the manufacturers at Sheffield. To humour public prejudice in regard to "Town Make," as it is called, and to serve as an advertisement for various retailers in London and other large towns, their connections in Sheffield keep steel brands, with which their names are placed on the articles, and they thereby pass with the public as the real manufacturers. The truth is, that in London there are no manufactories of such articles to any extent; and the cutlery-jobbers could not make a thousandth part requisite for the London consumption. In different workshops in Sheffield may be seen the steel brands of our famous *town makers*, and the articles in wholesale quantities being packed up to meet the demand in London for "*real town made*." This is a standing joke among the Sheffield cutlers, at the expense of Cockney credulity. — *Sir Richard Phillips's Personal Tour*.

But a penalty of 10*l.* per dozen, exclusive of forfeiture, is imposed upon every person having articles of cutlery in his possession for sale marked with the words "*London*," or "*London-made*," unless the articles so marked have been really manufactured within the city of London, or a distance of twenty miles from it.

CUTLERY MARKS.

The figure of a hammer stamped on knives and other articles of Cutlery is intended to denote their excellence, though it is often unwarrantable. The act 59 Geo. III. c. 7, gives the manufacturers of cutlery made of *wrought* steel the privilege of marking them with the figure of a hammer; and prohibits the manufacturers of any articles of cutlery, edge-tools, or hardware, *cast or formed in a mould*, or manufactured otherwise than by means of a hammer, from marking or impressing upon them the figure of a hammer, or any symbol or device resembling it, on pain of forfeiting all such articles, and 5*l.* for every dozen.

“ WHALEBONE.”

This substance is improperly named, since it has none of the properties of bone: its correct name is baleen. It is found attached to the upper jaw, and serves to strain the water which the whale takes into its large mouth, and to retain the small animals on which it subsists. For this purpose, the baleen is in plenty, sometimes 800 pieces in one whale, placed across each other at regular distances, with the fringed edge towards the mouth.

Seeing that the head furnishes the baleen, the record of an ancient perquisite of our Queens Consort evinces gross ignorance of the natural economy of the whale. This privilege was, that on the taking of a whale on the British coasts, it should be divided between the King and Queen; the head only being the King's property, and the tail the Queen's. The reason for this whimsical distinction, as assigned by our ancient records, was to furnish the Queen's wardrobe with whalebone!

FRENCH GLOVES.

The preference given in this country to French Gloves is no matter of fashion or prejudice, as is commonly supposed, but of judgment on the part of the purchaser. Not only is the kid finer and better dressed of which gloves are made in France, but the gloves themselves are better cut than in England; and their superior fitting must arise from the French manufacturers possessing a correct or scientific knowledge of the shape of the hand, as we gather from the evidence of a first-rate London “warehouseman” before the Parliamentary Committee upon Arts and Manufactures. It should, however, be added, that there are very few manufactures in which the French excel so much as in gloves; and this circumstance has strengthened the evidence in favour of the necessity of establishing Schools of Design in this country, to enable our manufacturers to compete with the taste as well as materials of the Continent.

BRITISH PORCELAIN AND POTTERY.

The designs upon Porcelain and Earthenware manufactured in Britain, have long been referred to as a proof of the bad taste of the manufacturers; though in this case the censure should be thrown upon the public themselves.* For example, the common earthenware manufacture takes its style of ornament from China, which was brought to this country many years since, and is continued in use to this day. Many years since, a great improvement was made in multiplying the copies of su-

* Indeed, in most cases it will be found that manufacturers follow, and do not lead, the public taste, as is commonly supposed.

perior designs for transfer to the surface of the ware by printing off cylinders a continuous sheet; but such was the constant demand for the old Chinese barbaric ornaments, from the bad taste of the public, that the manufacturers were compelled to engrave these faulty designs upon the new cylinders; notwithstanding they had at the same time produced much more tasteful designs of their own.

BENEFITS OF THE CHIMNEY.

A great deal has been written of late years in disparagement of the open coal fire and the chimney, in comparison with the stove and flue; but Professor Faraday has shown the chimney to possess very important functions in sanitary economy. Thus a parlour fire will consume in twelve hours forty pounds of coal, the combustion rendering 42,000 gallons of air unfit to support life. Not only is that large amount of deleterious product carried away, and rendered innoxious by the chimney, but five times that quantity of air is also carried up by the draught, and ventilation is thus effectually maintained.

Since the ascent of smoke up a chimney depends on the comparative lightness of the column of air within to that of an equal column without, the longer the chimney the stronger will be the draught, if the fire be sufficiently great to heat the air; but if the chimney be so long that the air is cooled as it approaches the top, the draught is diminished.—*Faraday*.

EXPERIMENTAL VENTILATION.

Undoubtedly ignorance is often sanctioned "by way of experiment." Dr. Arnott, in his Evidence before the House of Commons on the Health of Towns, observes: "The Errors committed from want of knowledge are extraordinary. I heard, at the Zoological Gardens, of a class of animals where fifty out of sixty were killed in a month by putting them in a house with no opening in it but a few inches in the floor: it was like putting them under an extinguisher; and this was supposed to be done upon scientific principles."

GAS-LIGHTING AND VENTILATION.

Because there is no visible smoke, and little odour, from gas, which is completely burned, it is commonly believed that little or nothing is to be apprehended from the burned air being allowed to diffuse itself and to remain in the room; but this is a dangerous misapprehension. The products of the combination of gas are water and carbonic acid, which last-named is the same as the directly invisible smoke of charcoal, and is what, when collected in mines, is called *choke-damp*. The deaths oc-

caused by gas-explosions in coal-mines are owing much more to the choke-damp which is left after the explosion than from the heat or mechanical violence which precedes it. A chimney for gas-lamps is therefore almost as essential to the maintenance of pure atmosphere in rooms, as the chimney for the fire. —*Dr. Arnott.*

EXHAUSTION OF BRITISH COAL-MINES.

The importance of Coal as a necessary of life, and the degree in which our superiority in arts and manufactures depends upon our obtaining supplies of it at a cheap rate, has naturally attracted a great deal of attention to the question as to the period when the Exhaustion of our Coal-mines may be anticipated. But the investigations hitherto made as to the magnitude and thickness of the different coal-beds, and the extent to which they may be wrought, are too vague and unsatisfactory to afford grounds for forming any thing like a tolerably near approximation to a solution of this question. But such as they are, they are sufficient to show that *many centuries* must elapse before posterity can feel any serious difficulties from a diminished supply of coal. According to Mr. Taylor, an experienced coal-owner, the coal-fields of Durham and Northumberland are adequate to furnish the present annual supply for more than 1700 years. Dr. Buckland, the celebrated geologist, considers this estimate as very greatly exaggerated; but in his examination before the committee of the House of Commons, he quotes and approves a passage from Bakewell's *Geology*, in which it is stated that the coal-beds in South Wales are alone sufficient to supply the whole present demand of England for coal for 2000 years.

Dr. Buckland thus eloquently elucidates the seventh stage of the long eventful history of Coal, when, having been "burnt," it seems to the vulgar eye to undergo annihilation:

"Its elements are, indeed, released from the mineral combinations they have maintained for ages; but their apparent destruction is only the commencement of new successions of change and of activity. Set free from their long imprisonment, they return to their native atmosphere, from which they were absorbed to take part in the primeval vegetation of the earth. To-morrow they may contribute to the substance of timber in the trees of our existing forests; and, having for a while resumed their place in the living vegetable kingdom, may ere long be applied a second time to the use and benefit of man. And when decay or fire shall once more consign them to the earth, or to the atmosphere, the same elements will enter on some further department of their perpetual ministration in the economy of the material world."

COALS AT BLACKHEATH.

It was long a commonly-received opinion that Coals were to be found as near London as Blackheath, but that the seek-

ing for them was forbidden on account of the Newcastle-coal-trade being so excellent a nursery for seamen. Geologists have, however, ascertained that the great coal-field of Britain, which is composed of numerous subordinate coal-fields, crosses the island in a diagonal direction: the south boundary-line extending from near the mouth of the river Humber to the south part of the Bristol Channel, on the west coast; and the north boundary-line extending from the south side of the river Tay in Scotland, westward by the south side of the Ochil mountains to near Dumbarton, on the river Clyde; within which boundary-lines North and South Wales are included. This area is about two hundred and sixty miles in length, and on an average about one hundred and fifty miles in breadth; and no coal-field of any consequence has been found either to the north or south of the lines mentioned, excepting some small patches of thin coals of inferior quality, and the coal-field of Brora, in Sutherlandshire, in Scotland, which is far disjoined from any other coal-field.

“BRASS-PLATE COAL-MERCHANTS.”

Middle-men, when numerous in retail trades, enhance the prices of the commodities they deal in without equivalent good to the purchaser. This is especially the case in the coal-trade. In an inquiry by Parliament into the state of the coal-trade some years since, it appeared that five-sixths of the London public were supplied by a class of middle-men, who are called in the trade “Brass-plate Coal-merchants.” They consist of persons who have no wharfs, but merely give their orders to some true coal-merchant, who sends in the coals from his wharf. The Brass-plate Coal-merchant, of course, receives a commission for his agency, which is just so much loss to the consumer.

“CANNEL COAL.”

There has been considerable dispute respecting the origin of this Error or corrupt term. Sir George Head, when on his *Home Tour*, took some pains while at Liverpool, and subsequently at Kendal, St. Helen's, and other places, to obtain the meaning of the phrase. Some of this coal is procured at St. Helen's; but the greater quantity comes from Wigan, and is dug out of the same shafts with ordinary coal, although existing in different seams. It appears to be a substance between ordinary coal and jet. In Liverpool and elsewhere it is advertised by boards and placards: “Coal and Cannel Coal sold here,” and is invariably spelt “Cannel.” If it have really taken its name from Kendal, the people of this town are not aware of such origin; neither is there any reason that it should

originally have been called Cannel Coal, it having been dug before canals were adopted, and transported together with larger quantities of ordinary coal. It seems to be the general opinion, that having been used to light the men at their work, and serving as candle, it became by corruption "Cannel" Coal. It is singular how soon words and phrases creep into use, and totally obliterate every recollection of the cause that produced them.

ECONOMY OF COKE AND COAL.

Coke is not so economical as is generally supposed. It is true that a pound of Coke produces nearly as much heat as a pound of Coal; but it is equally true that a pound of coal gives only three-quarters of a pound of coke, notwithstanding the latter is more bulky than the former.

WASTE OF COAL.

It is wasteful to wet fuel, because the moisture evaporated carries off with it as latent, and therefore useless heat, a considerable proportion of what the combustion produces. It is a very common prejudice that the wetting of coal, by making it last longer, is effecting a great saving; but while, in truth, it restrains the combustion, and for a time makes a bad fire, it also wastes the heat.

RAKING OUT THE FIRE.

This short-sighted measure of economy, so far from being conducive to safety, is attended with great danger. It was observed to the British Association, in 1838, that "Newcastle, notwithstanding the vast consumption of coal in the town, is remarkably free from fires of dangerous magnitude; and it was suggested whether, as the greater number of fires occurred in London about eleven o'clock at night, the practice of raking out the fire at bed-time, which is not done at Newcastle, where coals are cheap, might not have some connection with these conflagrations." An experienced London fireman is stated to have remarked, that a great proportion of the fires in the metropolis are caused by raking out the fire at bed-time.

DISTANCES OF "FIRES."

A conflagration at night appears to spectators generally as if much nearer than it really is; and unthinking persons frequently run towards it with the expectation of reaching the spot every instant, and are thus led considerable distances. The cause of this miscalculation of distance is the intense brightness of the fire in contrast with the darkness of the night.

THE SUN EXTINGUISHING THE FIRE.

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There is a common opinion, that the direct action of the rays of the Sun diminishes the combustion of a common Fire. This notion has often been ridiculed as erroneous; and, with a view to put it to the test of experiment, Dr. M'Keever ascertained the actual rate of combustion of well-known bodies in different circumstances. It appears from these trials, that the quantity of wax-taper consumed in broad sunshine, in the open air, is less than that consumed in a darkened room, in the same time, in the proportion of ten to eleven. When the experiment was made with a common mould candle, an inch in length was consumed in fifty-nine minutes in strong sunshine, temperature eighty degrees; in fifty-six minutes in a darkened room, temperature sixty-eight degrees. Other trials were made to ascertain the effect of the different coloured rays of the prismatic spectrum on combustion, and it was found to proceed most rapidly in the verge of the violet ray. The times of consuming the same length of taper in the different portions of the spectrum were: in the red ray, eight minutes; green ray, eight minutes, twenty seconds; violet ray, eight minutes, thirty-nine seconds; verge of the violet ray, eight minutes, fifty-seven seconds. The common opinion is therefore correct; but the difference is not so considerable as might be expected.

THE OAK AND YEAST.

Evelyn was willing to believe any thing which did honour to the Oak. Its twigs, he says, twisted together, dipt in wort, well-dried, and then kept in barley straw, by being steeped in wort at any future time, will cause it to ferment, and procure Yeast. But the properties of the oak have nothing to do with this; and the bundle, whatever it is (a furze-bush is commonly used in those countries where the practice is known), must be dipped in the fermenting and yeasty liquor—it is a mode of preserving yeast dry. See Evelyn's *Sylva*, a work in which there are necessarily some errors of both kinds, scientific as well as popular; there are likewise many curious things and some useful ones, which have ceased to be generally known.

MOTHS FROM CLOTHES.

An ill-founded opinion prevails, that Moths may be kept from Clothes by placing in or near them camphor, pepper, cedar-wood, Russia leather, &c.; whereas these precautions are useless unless the clothes be also taken out frequently, brushed, and aired. That camphor and the above substances are insufficient to keep away insects, has been proved by moths

origig hatched in an atmosphere impregnated with camphor befa the substances referred to.

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COTTON POISONOUS.

Popular prejudice long held that Cotton was poisonous: this error originated in the pain felt on holding a cotton-handkerchief to the eyes or nose of a person with a cold in the head; for the cotton, by not allowing passage to the heat, increased the temperature and the distress; whilst a linen or cambric handkerchief, by conducting, would readily absorb the heat, and diminish the inflammation.

BITTER ALMONDS.

There was formerly a notion, but it was quite erroneous, that the eating of Bitter Almonds would prevent the intoxicating effects of wine. This error has, however, been exploded since the days of Sir Thomas Browne, who observes:

"It hath much deceived the hope of good fellows, what is commonly expected of bitter almonds; and though in Plutarch confirmed from the practice of Claudian, his physician, that antidote against ebriety hath commonly failed. Surely men much versed in the practice do err in the theory of inebriation; conceiving in that disturbance the brain doth only suffer from exhalations and vaporous ascensions from the stomach, which fat and oily substances may suppress. Whereas the prevalent intoxication is from the spirits of drink dispersed into the veins and arteries, from whence by common conveyancers they creep into the brain, insinuate into its ventricles, and beget those vertigoes accompanying that perversion."—*Vulgar Errors*, book ii. ch. 6.

EDIBLE MUSHROOMS.

The confused notions which most persons have respecting the distinction of Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms have led to fatal consequences. The following indications may therefore in some degree serve to correct the error. Whenever a fungus is pleasant in flavour and odour, it may be considered wholesome; if, on the contrary, it have an offensive smell, a bitter, astringent, or styptic taste, or even if it leave an unpleasant flavour in the mouth, it should not be considered fit for food. The colour, figure, and texture of these vegetables do not afford any characters on which we can safely rely; yet, it may be remarked, that in colour, the pure yellow, gold colour, bluish pale, dark or lustre brown, wine-red, or the violet, belong to many that are esculent; whilst the pale or sulphur yellow, bright or blood-red, and the greenish, belong to few but the poisonous. The safe kinds have most frequently a compact brittle texture; the flesh is white; they grow more readily in open places, such as dry pastures and waste lands, than in places humid, or shaded by wood. In general, those should be

suspected which grow in caverns and subterraneous passages, on animal matter undergoing putrefaction, as well as those whose flesh is soft or watery.—*Brande's Journal*.

GREEN TEA.

There was once an idea prevalent that the colour of the Green Tea was to be ascribed to the drying of the leaves on copper; but nothing can be more unfounded than such an opinion, as the pans, one of which was sent home by an officer of the East India Company, are of cast-iron. That copper may be detected in tea is true; but Bucholz has shown that it exists in several vegetables; indeed there are proofs that it enters into the composition of a great proportion of animal and vegetable matter. It is found in coffee in very striking quantities; from ten ounces of unroasted coffee there may be obtained, by the proper manipulations, a dense precipitate, which will coat two inches of harpsichord-wire with metallic copper. And he who eats a sandwich has much more to fear from the poisonous effects of this metal than the drinker of green tea; for the two slices of bread, the beef, and the mustard, all have been proved by the examination of the chemist to be capable of forming in the stomach a metallic crust; indeed, the only safe food would be potatoes, for in three pounds no copper could be traced.—*Dr. Sigmond on Tea*.

But if there were any foundation for this supposition, volatile alkali mixed with an infusion of such tea would detect the least portion of copper by turning the infusion blue. Now the finest imperial and bloom teas show no signs of the presence of copper by this experiment. Others, and among them Boerhaave the celebrated physician, with less propriety, attributed the verdure to green copperas; but this ingredient, which is only salt of iron, would immediately turn the leaves black, and the infusion made from the tea would be of a dull purple colour. Sir George Staunton informs us that it is confidently said in China that tea is never dried upon plates of copper; the chief application of this metal being for coin.

Dr. Lettsom, in his valuable pamphlet on the Tea-plant, asks: "Is it not more probable that some green dye, prepared from vegetable substances, is used for the colouring?"

The *savans* had thus far settled the dispute, when Mr. Robert Fortune, in his *Residence among the Chinese*, published in 1857, adduced the following evidence:

If there is any one now who still clings to the old idea that green teas can be made *only* from the plant called *Thea viridis*, and black ones *only* from *Thea bohea*, he will find a difficulty in giving credit to the account I have to give of the manner in which the Ning-chow districts have changed their green teas into black. But however difficult it may

be to get rid of early prejudices, "facts are stubborn things;" and the truth of what I have to state may be fully relied upon. Many years ago a spirited Chinese merchant, who, no doubt, saw well enough that black and green teas could be made easily enough from the same plant, had a crop of *black* teas made in the Ning-chow district, and brought to Canton for sale. This tea was highly approved of by the foreign merchants of that port, and was bought, I believe, by the great house of Messrs. Dent and Company, and sent to England. When it got home, it found a ready sale in the market, and at once established itself as a black tea of the first class. Year by year after this the demand for this tea steadily increased, and was readily supplied by the Chinese. At the present time the Ning-chow districts produce black teas only, while in former days they produced only green. If proof were wanting, this would appear sufficient to show that black or green teas can be made from any variety of the tea-plant, and that the change of colour in the manufactured article depends entirely upon the mode of manipulation.

"GREEN OYSTERS."

A very common and very mistaken opinion exists, especially among foreigners, that not only the Green Oysters from Colchester, but all English oysters, are impregnated with copper, "which they get from feeding off copper banks." Such, we believe, would be quite as injurious to the animal itself as it could be to us, and the fancy can only have arisen from the strong flavour peculiar to this fish; and the green tinge is as natural to some varieties of Oysters as it is to a certain fish whose bones are of verdigris hue. Green Oysters are comparatively little esteemed in the present day.

Some years since, supposed poisonous Oysters were found adhering to the coppered bottom of a ship in the Virgin Isles; but the occasional accidents among the men that ate them were referred to other causes. Another report, equally absurd, was that of the fish having gradually quitted the Thames and Medway since coppering ships' bottoms has been introduced. Again, the idea of testaceous mollusca avoiding copper-bottomed vessels, but clinging to those of wood, is equally absurd; for this circumstance is explained by the greater facility with which these creatures adhere to wood.

EATING MUSCLES.

We frequently hear of people being *Muscled*, as it is termed; and it is generally supposed that the mischief is produced by some specifically poisonous quality in the fish. Mr. Richards, in his *Treatise on Nervous Disorders*, observes that he has seen many cases, but discovered nothing to confirm this popular opinion. In some instances, only one of a family has been affected, while all partook of the same Muscles. He has known exactly the same symptoms produced by pork, lobsters, and

other shell-fish, and can attribute them to nothing more than a disturbed state of digestion.

The vulgar opinion that Muscles are rendered unwholesome by the copper of ships' bottoms, is quite untenable. It is, however, conjectured, that Muscles become poisonous from disease, particularly of the liver, or from the introduction of poisonous medusæ into the shell.

It is extraordinary that Muscles should have a poisonous effect on some persons, at certain times, whilst occasionally they may eat them with impunity; and other persons will partake of the Muscles, which appear so pernicious in certain states of the system, without any bad effects. It appears to be quite uncertain to what this pernicious property may be owing; it has often caused death. See Orfila, Moehring, Rondeau, Burrows, and Fodere.—*Mr. R. Garner, F.L.S. ; in Charlesworth's Magazine of Natural History.*

MELTING SNOW WITH SALT.

Persons are in the habit of sprinkling Salt upon Snow before their doors. They could not do a more silly or injurious thing. The result is, to change dry snow or ice at the temperature of 32° to brine at 0. The injurious effect of damp upon the feet at this excessive degree of cold is likely to be extreme. If, then, any one does sprinkle salt upon snow in the street, he ought to feel it a matter of conscience to sweep it away immediately.—*Faraday.*

SALT IN BEER.

In Scotland, it was formerly customary to throw a little dry malt, and a handful of Salt, on the top of the mash, "to keep the witches from it;" and in private breweries, to prevent the interference of fairies, a live coal was thrown into the vat.

Subsequently Salt was added to the water used in extracting the sweet matter of malt, with a view, as has been supposed, of exciting thirst; but it produces other effects: in particular, it moderates the fermentation, makes the liquor fine, and is otherwise beneficial.

BEER TURNING SOUR.

"The thunder has soured the beer," is a common expression often founded on Error. Although Chaptal ascribes to agitation the operation of thunder, it is well known that when the atmosphere is highly electrified, beer is apt to become suddenly sour without the concussion of a thunderstorm. The beer may, therefore, have become sour by other means. The suddenness with which this change is effected during a thunderstorm, even in corked bottles, has not been accounted for.

Sir Thomas Browne remarks :

“Now that beer, wine, and other liquors, are spoiled with lightning and thunder, we conceive it proceeds not only from noise and concussion of the air, but also noxious spirits which mingle therewith and draw them to corruption ; whereby they become not only dead themselves, but sometimes deadly unto others, as that which Seneca mentioneth, whereof whosoever drank either lost his life or else his wits upon it.”—*Vulgar Errors*, book ii. ch. 6.

It was formerly believed that putting a cold iron-bar upon the barrels would preserve beer from being soured by thunder. This custom is common in Kent and Herefordshire.

“ SOY FROM BLACK-BEETLES.”

Sailors have a notion that Soy is made from cockroaches ; and, however absurd the belief may appear, the reason for it is worthy of investigation. The Chinese at Canton have a large Soy manufactory, and they are particularly solicitous to obtain cockroaches from ships ; from which circumstance sailors immediately conclude that it is for the purpose of making Soy from them. But it is better established that cockroaches are used by the Chinese as bait in fishing. The infusion of cockroaches is also used in medicine ; and Mr. Webster, surgeon of H. M. S. *Chanticleer*, states that common salt and water, saturated with the juices of the cockroach, has all the odour, and some of the flavour and qualities, of Soy ; so that the sailors' notion, after all, may not be far from the truth.

TEST OF BRINE.

A common test of the quantity of salt necessary to add to water, in making Brine for pickling meat, is to continue to add salt until an egg will swim in it. This, however, is an imperfect test of the strength of the Brine ; since an egg will float in a saturated solution of salt and water, and will also float if to the same saturated solution a bulk of pure water equal to twice the bulk of the latter be added. According to Gay-Lussac, seven ounces and a half of salt are necessary to saturate an imperial pint of water. This is important, since the efficacy of Brine in preserving meat depends very much upon getting a solution of salt at the exact point of saturation.

STRASBOURG PIES.

The *Pâtés de foie gras*, for which Strasbourg has been so long celebrated, were commonly said to be principally made from the livers of geese subjected to great torture, by being fed to repletion, but without water, before a fierce fire, until their

livers became enlarged with disease. Hence epicures began to feel some qualms of conscience for indulging in these luxuries, obtained by such cruel means; when Alexis Soyer, the famed *cuisinier*, visited Strasbourg, and in a letter to the *Courrier du Bas Rhin* states :

“After having carefully examined the subject, I can declare that there is not a word of truth in the general belief. Up to the age of eight months,” he adds, “the geese are allowed to feed at full liberty in the open air; they are then brought to market, and purchased by the persons whose occupation it is to fatten them for killing: they are placed in coops, and fed for about a month or five weeks three times a-day with wheat, and allowed as much water as they please. Each bird eats about a bushel of corn during the process of fattening; the water of Strasbourg, it is said, contributing to increase the volume of the liver. When sufficiently fat, they are killed, having been treated with the greatest attention and humanity during the whole period of their incarceration, and entirely removed from any unusual heat.”

COWS AND BUTTERCUPS.

It is commonly said that “the cow eats the buttercups, and so they help to make butter after all;” whereas the cow, in every possible way, does its best to avoid the buttercup, which is a nauseous, bitter herb, and, in walking through pastures as bare as possible, the buttercup is left in all its luxuriance. Cows may be seen tearing away the grass round a buttercup-plant (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), and leaving it untouched, with every particle of grass cropped close round it. Indeed, you may see pastures apparently most luxuriant, but on a nicer inspection there is nothing but buttercups left. Farmers like to see them, because they prefer good sound dry old pastures, and the remainder of the herbage is generally good. But cows avoid them as much as possible.—*Athæneum*, No. 1489.

THE GOLDEN PIPPIN.

The Golden Pippin, one of the most celebrated and esteemed apples of this country, has been considered by some of our modern writers on pomology to be in a state of decay, its fruit of inferior quality in comparison with that of former times, and its existence near its termination. Dr. Lindley, in his *Guide to the Orchard and Kitchen Garden*, says :

“I cannot for a moment agree with such an opinion, because we have facts annually before our eyes completely at variance with such an assertion. Any person visiting Covent Garden or the Borough markets during the fruit season, and indeed any other large market in the southern or midland counties of England, will find specimens of fruit as perfect and as fine as any which have been either figured or described. In favourable situations, in many parts of the country, instead of the trees being in a state of rapid decay, they may be found of unusually large size, perfectly healthy, and their crops abundant; the fruit perfect in form, beautiful in colour, and excellent in quality.”

Traditional History.

FALLACY OF TRADITIONS.

How little reliance is to be placed upon the traditions repeated by vergers and guides to wondering sight-hunters, these few instances prove. They are by a Correspondent of *Notes and Queries*, No. 130 :

In spite of Sir Samuel Meyrick's judicious arrangement of the armour in the Tower, the Beefeaters still persist in the old stories handed down. At Warwick Castle, the rib of the dun cow is ascertained to be the bone of a fossil elephant ; and Guy's porridge-pot, a military cooking-utensil of the time of Charles I. St. Crispin's chair, carefully preserved in Linlithgow Cathedral by insertion in the wall, is of mahogany, —an American wood ! The chair of Charles I., at Leicester, bears a crown, which, having been the fashionable ornament after the Restoration, together with the form, betrays the date. Queen Eleanor's Crosses, it now appears, were not built by her affectionate husband, but by her own direction, and with her own money. The fire-place and other objects in Belted Will's bedroom in Naworth Castle, are manifestly of later date. The bedstead treasured up near Leicester as that occupied by Richard III. immediately before the battle of Bosworth, is in the style called Elizabethan. Queen Mary's bed, at Holyrood, is of the last century ; and her room at Hardwick is in a house which was not erected till after her death ; the tapestry and furniture, however, may have been removed from the old hall where she was imprisoned. The tower of Carnarvon Castle, in which the first Prince of Wales is supposed to have been born, is not of so early a period.

ERA AND EPOCH.

Much confusion frequently occurs in the use of these terms among chronologers : the accurate use is as follows : *Era* is any indefinite time ; *period* is a time included between two dates. The beginning and end of the period are *epochs*, though in common parlance *epoch* is generally confined to events of some distinction.

THE ALEXANDRIAN LIBRARY.

This celebrated collection is supposed to have been the largest collection which was ever brought together before the invention of printing, and is stated to have amounted to 700,000 volumes, a number which has been often doubted. It is not, however, so generally known that the rolls (*volumina*) here spoken of contained far less than a printed volume : for in-

stance, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, in fifteen books, would make fifteen volumes; and one Didymus is said by Athenæus to have written 3,500 volumes. This consideration will bring the number assigned at least within the bounds of credibility.

WHO ARE THE GIPSIES?

Gipsy, corrupted from Egyptians, is a name given in England to a wandering race of people, from the notion of their having originally migrated from Egypt into Europe: but it has been proved that they were not originally from that country; their appearance, manners, and language being totally different from those of either the Copts or Fellahs. Indeed, the error of supposing Gipsies to be Egyptians is thus exploded by Sir Thomas Browne:

“Common opinion deriveth them from Egypt, and from thence they derive themselves, according to their own account hereof, as Munster discovered in the letters and pass which they obtained from Sigismund, the emperor; that they first came out of Lesser Egypt, that having defected from the Christian rule, and relapsed into Pagan rites, some of every family were enjoined this penance to wander about the world;* or, as Aventius delivereth, they pretend for this vagabond course a judgment of God upon their forefathers, who refused to entertain the Virgin Mary and Jesus, when she fled into their country.

Which account, notwithstanding, is of little probability: for the general stream of writers who inquire into their origin all insist not upon this; and are so little satisfied in their descent from Egypt, that they deduce them from several nations: Polydore Vergil accounting them originally Syrians; Philippus Bergomas fetcheth them from Chaldaea; Æneas Sylvius, from some part of Turkey; Bellonius, no further than Wallachia and Bulgaria; nor Aventinus, than the confines of Hungaria

That they are no Egyptians, Bellonius maketh evident: who met droves of Gipsies in Egypt, about Grand Cairo, Matærea, and the villages on the banks of Nilus; who, notwithstanding, were accounted strangers unto that nation, and wanderers from foreign parts, even as they are esteemed with us.

That they came not out of Egypt is also probable, because their first appearance was in Germany since the year 1400. Nor were they observed before in other parts of Europe, as is deducible from Munster, Genebrard, Crantisius, and Ortilius.

But that they first set out from Germany is also probable from their language, which was the Slavonian tongue; and when they wandered afterwards into France, they were commonly called Bohemians, which name is still retained for gipsies. And therefore when Crantisius delivereth they first appeared about the Baltic Sea, when Bellonius deriveth them from Bulgaria and Wallachia, and others from about Hungaria, they speak not repugnantly hereto; for the language of those nations was Slavonian, at least some dialect thereof.”

The name of Bohemians here mentioned by Browne, appears to have been given to gipsies by the French, from some of them

* This statement of Browne is too parallel with the fate of the Israelites to be entertained as better than conjecture.

having come into France from Bohemia; others derive the word from *Boem*, an old French word signifying a sorcerer. (Moreri, art. *Bohémiens*; and Ducange's Glossary, art. *Ægyptiaci*.) This statement is at variance with that of Pasquier, who, in his *Recherches Historiques*, says they first appeared at Paris in August 1427, when they represented themselves as Christians driven out of Egypt by the Mussulmans, and the women assumed the calling of fortune-tellers. The Germans gave gipsies the name of *Zigeuner*, or wanderers; the Dutch called them *Heiden*, or heathens; the Danes and Swedes, *Tartars*. In Italy, they are called *Zingari*; in Turkey and the Levant, *Tchingenes*; in Spain, *Gitanos*; and in Hungary and Transylvania, where they are very numerous, they are called *Pharaoh-Nepek*, or Pharaoh's people. A recent traveller* considers there is not any country in Europe where the genuine gipsy is now to be found so thoroughly addicted to his original habits as in Hungary, where they are called *Cyguanis*.

It is, however, now no longer disputed whence gipsies originally came; for they are believed to have migrated from India at the time of the great Mohammedan invasion of Timor Beg, and to have belonged in their own country to one of the lowest castes, which resembles them in their appearance and habits. Pottinger, in his *Travels*, saw some tribes in Beloochistan; and there is a tribe near the mouths of the Indus called *Tchinganes*. The gipsies, in their language, call themselves *Sind*; and their language has been found to resemble some of the dialects of India.—*Bombay Transactions*, 1820.

That individuals have discovered Hindustani words among reputed gipsies is well known; but such instances are believed to be exceptional, and are accounted for in various ways. Recent researches into Eastern antiquities have enabled Sir Henry Rawlinson to ascertain the date of the migration of the gipsies from India towards the west. In the fourth century they proceeded to Beloochistan; from thence they reached Susiana, and in the sixth century they occupied the Chaldæan marshes; from whence they were moved to the Cilician gates, and continued to inhabit North Syria till the Greek emperors moved them to Iconium. In the thirteenth century they had reached the Bosphorus, and they were first heard of in Europe in the fourteenth century. Their arrival in Moldavia occurred in 1428, where they number 130,000, and are badly treated and sold. Consul Gardner, who has described them, says: "They call themselves by the Egyptian appellation, 'Pharaon.' Every where their dialect corresponds with the Hindustani, and in Aleppo they may be conversed with in that language without difficulty."

* The Rev. G. R. Gleig, in his travels in Germany, Hungary, and Bohemia.

Colonel Harriott, of the Bengal army, has contributed the best and largest list of gipsy words that had been published up to his time, in a paper on "The Oriental Origin of the Romnichal, or Tribe miscalled Gipsy and Bohemian," read before the Asiatic Society in December 1829 and January 1830, and published in their *Transactions*, vol. ii. p. 518. The Colonel picked up his Roumany rokkerpen (gipsy-tongue) in Hampshire from the Aires, Stanleys, Lees, and Peters, Roumany families still existing in that county. His vocabulary fills some twenty quarto pages, and contains parallelisms from the Hindi, Persian, Sanscrit, and references to other tongues from which the gipsies have borrowed in their many migrations.

The name by which the gipsies call themselves in England, says Mr. Tom Taylor, is always Roumăni; and this name seems also to be that given by themselves to the race all over the continent of Europe. The derivation of the word is doubtful. Borrow derives it from "Rom," a married man, "Roma," a married woman, as if it were "the people of families." Others connect it with the Wallachian Roumăni, which is simply "Romănus," the name still claimed by the Roman colonists of Dacia. Much may be said on both sides, as on most questions of derivation.

Gipsies exist at this moment in great numbers in all the countries of Europe, and a large portion of Asia; in parts of Africa; but not in America: and it is calculated that there are thus five millions of gipsies scattered over three quarters of the globe. In England, however, they are by no means so numerous as is commonly imagined: for the term gipsies is erroneously applied to the majority of wanderers, as travelling tinkers and musicians, makers of wooden spoons, ladles, &c. They must be considered mere pretenders to astrology, as fortune-tellers; for although they talk of telling "by the stars," not one in a thousand of the so-called gipsies knows one star from another. They also pretend to understand palmistry, or telling fortunes by the lines of the hand:

"As o'er my palm the silver piece she drew,
And traced the line of life with searching view,
How throb'd my fluttering pulse with hopes and fears,
To learn the colour of my future years!"

Rogers's Pleasures of Memory, i. 107.

But they have mostly passed into common beggars, or taken to a trade or business for a livelihood. The laws are too stringent to allow them to live by stealing as of old, when forests and unenclosed places were less rare than at present; and, moreover, the spread of knowledge among all classes has rendered their pretended arts of little benefit to them.

BEEF-EATERS.

From Henry VIII. it is thought that the yeomen of the guard derived the *sobriquet* by which they are known to every child in the realm—that of *Beef-eaters*, through the king's trick upon the surfeit-sick abbot of Reading. The royal frolic has been often related: it is enough here to remark, that it was performed in the disguise of a yeoman, and ended by restoring to the abbot his appetite for *beef*. For certain inquirers, however, this explanation was too literal, or perhaps displayed too little learning: so etymologists condemned the explanation as a vulgar error, and traced beef-eaters to *Buffetiers*, from the yeomen of the guard who waited at the royal table at great solemnities, and were ranged near the *buffets*, or sideboards. The former origin, nevertheless, seems the more probable, if any other than the obvious looks and living of the men themselves is at all wanted.

STATUE OF CHARLES I. AT CHARING CROSS.

A common error prevails, which reflects on Le Sœur, the artist of this statue, viz. that the horse is without a saddle-girth; but on a close inspection, one may certainly be discovered. To this misrepresentation it is sometimes added, that Le Sœur, having finished the statue, defied any beholder to point out a defect in his performance; when, on a person detecting the absence of the girth, Le Sœur, in a fit of vexation, destroyed himself. Both stories are equally void of truth.

The beautifully sculptured pedestal supporting the statue was long admired as the work of Grinling Gibbons, which Walpole describes it to be; but a written account, found by Mr. Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., proves the sculpture to be by Joshua Marshall, Master Mason to the Crown.

ANCIENT AND MODERN FREEMASONS.

They who take their notions of the original objects of Freemasonry from the Brethren of the present day, are lamentably in the dark:—"The connection between the operative masons, and those whom, without disrespect, we must term a convivial society of good fellows—who, in the reign of Queen Anne, met at the 'Goose and Gridiron, in St. Paul his Churchyard'—appears to have been finally dissolved about the beginning of the eighteenth century. The theoretical and mystic, for we dare not say ancient, freemasons, separated from the Worshipful Company of Masons and Citizens of London about the period above mentioned. It appears, from an inventory of the contents of the chest of the London Company, that not very

long since it contained 'A book wrote on parchment, and bound or stitcht in parchment, containing an 113 annals of the antiquity, rise, and progress of the art and mystery of Masonry.' But this document is not now to be found."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1839.

The old portion of Hampton Court Palace was built by freemasons, as appears from the accounts of the expenses of the fabric extant amongst the public records of London.

THE SIGN OF "THE GREEN MAN AND STILL."

In this sign we perceive a huntsman, in a *green coat*, standing by the side of a *still*; in allusion, as it has been facetiously conjectured, to the partiality shown by that description of gentry to a morning dram. The genuine representation, however, should be the *green man* (or man who deals in green herbs) with a bundle of peppermint or pennyroyal under his arm, which he brings to be distilled.—*Ritson's Life of Robin Hood*, notes and illustrations. (N.) 5.

WHO ARE COCKNEYS?

Etymologists have referred the term Cockney to Cockenay, from the Latin *coquinator* or *coquinarius*, a cook, as in Chaucer's "Reve's Tale,"—

"And when this jape is told another day,
I shall be holden a daffe or cockenay."

But, we may venture to ask, why should a term of the kitchen be applied as one of contempt *exclusively* to Londoners? In Chaucer's line, above quoted, the term evidently implies a silly person; and, if we mistake not, the word "daffe" is used in our day as *daft*, or stupid. Shakspeare too, in the *Twelfth Night*, employs the term in a similar sense, when the clown says, "I am afraid this great lubber world will prove a cockney;" although the expression in *King Lear*,—"Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels,"—has been interpreted in favour of cockney being originally a term of the kitchen.

Fuller, in his *Worthies*, gives the two following explanations of the term:

"1. One coaks'd or cocker'd, made a wanton or nestle-cock of, delicately bred and brought up, so that, when grown men or women, they can endure no hardship, nor comport with painstaking.

2. One utterly ignorant of husbandry and housewifery, such as is practised in the country, so that they may be persuaded any thing about rural commodities; and the original thereof, and the tale of the citizen's son, who knew not the language of the cock, but called it neighing, is commonly known."

"The tale of the cock neighing is gravely given by Minshieu in his *Guide into the Tongues*; and is repeated in succeeding dictionaries. Whatever be the origin, there can be no doubt that London was an-

ciently known by the name of Cockney. Fuller says: 'It is more than four hundred years old; for when Hugh Bigot added artificial fortifications to the natural strength of his castle at Bungay, in Suffolk, he gave out this rhyme, therein vaunting it for impregnable:—

Were I in my castle of Bungey,
Upon the river of Waveney,
I would ne care for the king of Cookeney:

meaning thereby King Henry the Second, then peaceably possessed of London.' Tyrwhitt, in his *Notes on Chaucer*, ingeniously suggests that the author of these rhymes, 'in calling London Cockeney, might possibly allude to that imaginary country of idleness and luxury, which was anciently known by the name of Cokaigne, or Cocagne; a name which Hicks (*Gram. Anglo-Sax.* p. 231) has shown to be derived from Coquina.' Boileau, in his *Satires*, speaks as if the same appellation had been bestowed upon the French as upon the English metropolis, thus,—

'Paris est pour un riche un pays de Cocagne.'*

The festival of Cocagna at Naples, described by Keyslor, appears to have the same foundation."—*Pictorial Shakspeare*: notes to *King Lear*, p. 429.

According to Fynes Moryson, the Londoners, and all within the sound of Bow-bell, are in reproach called cockneys, and eaters of buttered toasts.

All that we can arrive at is, that the term cockney had less reference to the kitchen than the parlour.

ORIGIN OF SHOREDITCH.

Stow declares this ancient manor, parish, and street, of London, to have been called Soersditch more than 400 years before his time; and Weever states it to have been named from Sir John de Soerdich, lord of the manor *temp.* Edward III.,† and who was with that king in his wars with France. The legend of its being called after Jane Shore dying in a ditch in its neighbourhood is a popular error, traceable to a black-letter ballad in the Pepys Collection, entitled *The Woful Lamentation of Jane Shore, a Goldsmith's Wife in London, some time King Edward IV. his Concubine*:

"I could not get one bit of bread,
Whereby my hunger might be fed;
Nor drink, but such as channels yield,
Or stinking ditches in the field.
Thus, weary of my life at length,
I yielded up my vital strength
Within a ditch of loathsome scent,
Where carrion dogs did much frequent:
The which now, since my dying daye,
Is Shoreditch call'd, as writers saye."

* The "*Mât de Cocagne*," the Mast of Cocagne, is to this day one of the favourite sports of the Champs Elysées, in Paris; and is known in England as the greased pole with a shoulder of mutton at its apex: yet with us it is strictly a country sport.

† Two miles north-east of Uxbridge is Ickenham Hall, the seat of the Soerdich family, who have been owners of the manor from the time of Edward III.

But this ballad is not older than the middle of the 17th century; and no mention is made of Jane so dying in a ballad by Th. Churchyard, dated 1587. Dr. Percy erroneously refers *Shoreditch* to "its being a common sewer, vulgarly *shore*, or drain." It is also called *Sorditch*; which is the most correct, according to the above explanation.—*Curiosities of London*, pp. 663-4.

PEDLAR'S ACRE.

The well-known piece of ground at Lambeth which bears this name is traditionally said to have been bequeathed to the parish by a pedlar, upon the condition that his picture, with that of his dog, should be perpetually preserved in glass in one of the windows of the church; and in the south window of the middle aisle such a picture exists. It has been suggested, however, and with greater probability, that this portrait was intended rather as a *rebus* upon the benefactor (Chapman) than as descriptive of his trade; for in the church at Swaffham, in Norfolk, is the portrait of John Chapman, a great benefactor to that parish; and the device of a pedlar and his pack occurs in several parts of the church; which circumstance has given rise to nearly the same tradition at Swaffham as at Lambeth. Besides, Pedlar's Acre was not originally so named; but was called the Church Hope, or Hopys; and is stated in the register to have been bequeathed by "a person unknown."

VAUXHALL AND GUY FAWKES.

There does not appear to be the least ground for the tradition that Vauxhall, or Fauxhall, was the residence of Guy Fawkes, except the common coincidence of names. Jane Vaux, or Faukes, mentioned in the History of Lambeth as holding a copyhold tenement at Vauxhall in the year 1615, was the widow of John Vaux. The infamous Guy, or Guido, was a man of desperate fortune, and not likely to have a settled habitation any where, much less a capital mansion. It appears, however, that the conspirators of the detestable plot in which he was concerned held their meetings in Lambeth, at a private house, which was accidentally burnt in the year 1635.—*Lysons*.

THE STAR-CHAMBER.

The origin of the name of this infamous court has been much disputed; but Mr. Caley has satisfactorily traced it to the ceiling of the chamber being ornamented with gilded stars. Barrington's reference is to *Stor* or *Storrum*, a Jewish contract in ancient contracts.—(For a *précis* of its history, see *Things not generally Known*, pp. 169-171.)

EL DORADO OF SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

The term *El Dorado* is commonly considered to have been the sovereignty teeming with precious metals, which had long been sought for in vain by Spanish adventurers. Their expeditions in quest of it were directed to the interior of the vast region lying between the Orinoco and the Amazon, or Guiana. The rocks were represented as impregnated with gold, the veins of which lay so near the surface as to make it shine with a dazzling resplendency. The capital, Manoa, was said to consist of houses covered with plates of gold, and to be built upon a vast lake, named Parima, the sands of which were auriferous.

El Dorado was not, however, originally used to designate any particular place; it signified generally "the gilded," or "golden," and was variously applied. According to some, it was first used to denote a religious ceremony of the natives, in covering the anointed body with gold-dust. The whole of Guiana was, on account of the above usages, sometimes designated by the term *El Dorado*; but the locality of the fable which came to appropriate that name was successively assigned to different quarters of that vast region, and the expeditions in search of it varied accordingly. The question, however, to be solved is, whence arose the belief that a district so marvellously abundant with the precious metals existed in the interior of Guiana; and the solution appears to have been left to Humboldt. While exploring the countries upon the Upper Orinoco, he was informed that the portion of Eastern Guiana lying between the rivers Essequibo and Branco is "the classical soil of the Dorado of Parima." In the islets and rocks of mica, slate, and talc which rise up within and around a lake adjoining the Parima river, reflecting from their shining surfaces the rays of an ardent sun, we have materials out of which to form that gorgeous capital, the temples and houses of which were overlaid with plates of beaten gold. With such elements to work upon, heated fancies, aided by the imperfect vision of distant and dubious objects, might easily create that fabulous superstructure. We may judge of the brilliancy of these deceptive appearances, from learning that the natives ascribed the lustre of the Magellanic Clouds, or nebula of the southern hemisphere, to the bright reflections produced by them.—*Humboldt*. There could not well be a more poetical exaggeration of the lustrous effects produced by the metallic hues of rocks of talc. These details, in which M. de Pons, a somewhat later traveller, who long resided in an official capacity in the neighbouring countries, fully concurs, in all probability point to the true origin of this remarkable fable. The well-known failure of Raleigh did not discourage other adventurers, who were found in quick succes-

sion; the last always flattering themselves with the hope that the discovery of El Dorado would ultimately be realised.—*Edinburgh Review abridged.*

ORIGIN OF STERLING.

Camden, writing of Sterling Borough and Castle, says: "They are much mistaken who think that our good and lawful money of England, commonly called *sterling* money, takes its name from hence; for that came from the Germans, who were termed *easterlings* by the English from their living eastward, and who were first called in by King John to reduce the silver to its due fineness; and such money, in ancient writings, is always called *easterlings*."

HOUSES IN WHICH NELL GWYN IS SAID TO HAVE LIVED.

Mr. Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., in his piquant *Story of Nell Gwyn*, says:

There are more houses pointed out in which Nell Gwyn is said to have lived than sites of palaces belonging to King John, hunting-lodges believed to have sheltered Queen Elizabeth, or mansions and posting-houses in which Oliver Cromwell resided or put up. Nell is said by some to have been born at Hereford, by others at London; and Oxford, it is found, has a fair claim to be considered as her birthplace. But the houses in which she is said to have lived far exceed in number the cities contending for the honour of her birth. She is believed by some to have lived at Chelsea, by others at Bagnigge Wells, Highgate; and Walworth, and Filberts, near Windsor, are added to the list of reputed localities. A staring inscription in the Strand, in London, instructs the curious passenger that a house at the upper end of a narrow court was formerly "the dairy of Nell Gwyn." I have been willing to believe in one and all of these conjectural residences; but, after a long and careful inquiry, I am obliged to reject them all. Her early life was spent in Drury-Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields; her latter life in Pall Mall, and in Burford House, in the town of Windsor. The rate-books of the parish of St. Martin's-in-the Fields record her residence in Pall Mall from 1670 to her death; and the site of her house in Windsor may be established, were other evidence wanting, by the large engraving after Knyff.

THE RHONE AND THE LAKE OF GENEVA.

John Evelyn, in his *Diary*, repeats the so-often-repeated assertion, that the Rhone passes through the Lake of Geneva with such velocity as not to mingle with its waters. Of all the fables which credulity delights to believe and propagate, this should appear the most impossible to obtain belief; for the Rhone, when it enters the lake, is both of the colour and consistency of pea-soup, and it issues out of it perfectly clear, and of so deep a blue that no traveller can ever have beheld it without astonishment. Evelyn had seen it in both places, and yet repeats the common story; which, had it been fact instead of fable, would have been less remarkable than the actual, and as yet unexplained, phenomenon of its colour at Geneva.

Natural History.

UGLINESS OF ANIMALS.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE observes: I cannot tell by what logic we call a toad, a bear, and an elephant, ugly, they being created in those outward shapes and figures which best express the actions of their inward forms, and having passed that general visitation of God, who saw that all that He had made was good, that is, conformable to His will, which abhors deformity, and is the rule of order and beauty.

One great cause of cruelty is teaching children to look upon the lower animals, unless they are "very pretty," with general dread and dislike. I can well remember how (says Mr. Rowell, in his *Essay on the Beneficent Distribution of the Sense of Pain*), when a boy I have often picked up a caterpillar, and while admiring its beauty or form, been told to throw it down, and kill it; that it was a devil's ring, and if it got round my finger, I should never get it off again. Toads and other creatures are cruelly used by boys from an habitual dread and disgust of them; and it is often thought quite right to torture carnivorous animals, such as the polecat, weasel, &c., as a punishment for their cruel propensities. Children are sometimes taught to look upon such creatures as "wicked things:" they are told of the crafty spider that catches the poor flies, or of the cruel hawk which kills the pretty birds: such teaching is not only ridiculous, but in some degree impious, as arraigning the laws of nature. Man may be cruel, when, although endowed with reason, he wilfully tortures or injures any creatures; but how can any animal be said to be cruel, when following the instincts with which its Creator has endowed it, and performing the functions for which it was created?

VENTRILOQUISM.

What reference the word *Ventriloquism* can possibly bear to a faculty whereby the whole mystery is performed by the muscles of the throat, says Sir George Head in his *Home Tour*, I am at a loss to know; whereas, by the etymology, one might fairly presume that that indolent organ the belly, whose province proverbially is to do nothing but eat, were now about to assume a new privilege, break silence, and talk. At all events, no matter how the sound be generated, the artist has positively no control over its transmission; and although indistinctness of utterance may create a sort of impression of distance, yet for the rest of the deception—the *hic-et-ubique* sensation of a voice proceeding down the chimney, or upwards through the window—such fantasies exist, even to their unlim-

ited extent, solely in the imagination of the hearer. A familiar, or doll, is an indispensable member of a ventriloquist's establishment ; and, for aught we know to the contrary, the Grecian sage, with his demon, was merely a ventriloquist ; or, at all events, an autoloquist, or thinker aloud. The author then notices an occasion when the office was performed by a small wooden effigy, in likeness of an old man with a wig, whose lips, when supposed to speak, moved extremely naturally ; so as by alluring the eye to a definite point effectually to imbue every spectator with a notion of reality.

“ ADAM'S APPLE ”

Is the name given to the protuberance in the fore part of the throat, occasioned by the projection of the thyroid cartilage of the larynx. This name originated from a superstitious tradition, that a piece of the forbidden fruit which Adam ate stuck in his throat, and occasioned the swelling.

CREOLES.

The word Creole is often, in England, understood to imply a Mulatto ; but the term means a native of a West Indian colony, whether white, black, or of the coloured population.

THE WHALE NOT A FISH.

Although the home of the *Cetaceæ* (to which class of animals whales belong) be entirely in the waters, they have several features in common with the larger quadrupeds. They belong to the Linnæan class of *Mammalia*, or suck-giving animals : they produce their young alive ; their skin is smooth, and without scales ; their blood warm, and the flesh tastes somewhat like coarse beef. They have a head with two ventricles, and lungs through which they respire ; and being unable to separate the air from the water, as fishes do by means of their gills, they must come to the surface in order to breathe. *It is thus by no means strictly scientific to call the Whale a Fish ;* yet he is entirely an inhabitant of the sea, having a tail, though placed differently from that of ordinary fishes, while his front limbs much more resemble fins than legs, and are solely used for pawing the deep. Hence the vulgar, following a natural and descriptive classification, obstinately continue to give the name of fish to the whale.

In representations of the whale, we generally see two spouts of water mounting into the air from his nostrils, when he is above the water, like artificial fountains. These are occasioned merely by the mode in which the animal breathes ; and it is an error to suppose that he ejects the water through the nostrils. It is, on the contrary, the breath which is thus discharged, mixed with mucous matter, and perhaps the foam of a wave

which may happen to dash over them. When this vehement breathing or blowing is performed *under the surface*, much water is thrown out into the air.

The whale too has been regarded as an ill omen. Aubrey says: "A little before the death of Oliver Protector, a whale came into the river Thames, and was taken at Greenwich. 'Tis said, Oliver was troubled at it."

JONAH'S WHALE AND GOURD.

The Rev. Dr. Scot, of Corstorphine, has shown to the Wernerian Society (*Proc.* 1828) that the great fish which swallowed up Jonah could not be a Whale, as often supposed, but was probably a white shark. It is true that "a whale" is not used in the text of *Jonah*, but "a great fish;" still "a whale" is mentioned in reference to this passage, which our Saviour makes in *Matt.* xxii. 40.

While the Greek version makes the plant under which Jonah sat a Gourd, the Vulgate reckons it a species of ivy; but the castor-oil tree, with its broad palmate leaves, has been more closely identified with the gourd of Jonah.

SPERMACETI.

Spermaceti is erroneously supposed to be found in the cranium of the long-headed whale, whereas it is the fat of that animal. Formerly spermaceti was only used as a medicine; but annually many tons of it were thrown into the Thames as useless, the quantity brought to this country being so much more than was required for medicinal purposes. It has, however, become very valuable since candles have been made of it mixed with tallow or wax.

The following note, subjoined by the poet Southey to his *Thalaba*, ii. 155, throws some light upon the former rare employment of spermaceti in this country:—"The common people of England have long been unacquainted with the change which muscular fibre undergoes (when it is converted into adipocere). Before the circumstance was known to philosophers, I have heard them express a dislike and loathing to spermaceti, because it was dead men's fat."

THE SLOTH.

The excellent account of this animal in Waterton's *Wanderings in South America*, corrects the endless errors of naturalists with respect to its natural history,—errors which have been continued even to the present day.

"Those who have written on this singular animal," says Mr. Waterton, "have remarked that he is in a perpetual state of pain; that he is proverbially slow in his movements; that he is a prisoner in space; and that as soon as he has consumed all the leaves of the tree upon which he

had mounted, he rolls himself up in the form of a ball, and then falls to the ground. This is not the case. If the naturalists who have written the history of the Sloth had gone into the wilds in order to examine his haunts and economy, they would not have drawn the foregoing conclusions; they would have learned that, though all other quadrupeds may be described while resting on the ground, the sloth is an exception to this rule, and that his history must be written while he is in the tree. This singular creature is destined by Nature to be produced, to live, and to die, in the trees. It mostly happens that Indians and Negroes are the people who catch the sloth and bring it to the white man; hence it may be conjectured that the erroneous accounts we have hitherto had of the sloth have not been penned with the slightest intention to mislead the reader, or give him an exaggerated history, but that these errors have naturally arisen by examining the sloth in those places where Nature never intended that he should be exhibited."

With respect to the alleged tardiness, from which the sloth has been erroneously named, Mr. Waterton states: "He travels at a good round pace; and were you to see him pass from tree to tree as I have done, you would never think of calling him a sloth."

THE LION.

The Lion has been styled "The King of the Beasts," from his surpassing in physical strength all other animals. His generosity and courage are more doubtful. Mr. Burchell, the traveller in Africa, says: "When men first adopted the lion as an emblem of courage, it would seem that they regarded great size and strength as indicating it; but they were greatly mistaken in the character they have given to this indolent, skulking animal, and have overlooked a much better example of true courage, and of other virtues also, in the bold and faithful dog." Still, very different accounts are given by travellers of the cruelty or generosity of the lion's nature, which result in all probability from a difference in time or circumstances, or the degree of hunger which the individual experienced when the respective observations were made upon him.

The lions of Lord Prudhoe, in the British Museum, are the best sculptured representations of the animal in this country. Although the lion is our natural hieroglyphic, and there are many hundred statues of him, yet not one among them all appears without a defect, which makes our representations of him belong to the class *canis*, instead of *felis*—a fault not found in any Egyptian sculpture.—*M. Bonomi: Proceedings of the Royal Society of Literature*, 1840.

TAMED LIONS.

The punishment of being thrown to Lions was a very common one among the Romans of the first century; and very numerous tales are extant in which the fierce animals became

meek and lamb-like before the holy virgin daughters of the Church. This, indeed, is the origin of the superstition, nowhere more beautifully expressed than in Lord Byron's *Siege of Corinth* :

'Tis said that a lion will turn and flee
From a maid in the pride of her purity.

Christmas's Cradle of the Twin Giants, vol. i. p. 296.

THE CAT.

It is a prevalent notion that Cats are fond of sucking the breath of infants ; and consequently, of producing disease and death. Upon the slightest reflection, nothing can be more obvious than that it is impossible for a cat to suck an infant's breath,—at least, so as to do it any injury ; for even on the supposition that it did so, the construction of its mouth must preclude it from interrupting the process of breathing by the mouth and the nose at the same time. This vulgar error must have arisen from cats nestling about infants in beds and cradles, to procure warmth.

A curious collection of " Characteristics of the Cat " will be found in *Things not generally Known*, pp. 77-79.

THE SHREW-MOUSE AND THE ASH.

Our peasantry have a superstitious custom of boring a hole in an Ash, and fattening a Shrew Mouse in it. A few strokes with a branch of this tree is then accounted a sovereign remedy against cramp and lameness in cattle, which are ignorantly supposed to proceed from this really harmless animal. The Rev. Gilbert White, in his *History of Selborne*, gives a very amusing account of this superstition.

The shrew-mouse is believed by country-people to be venomous ; and, from the numbers that are found dead, it has been said that neither the owl nor the cat will eat it when they have killed it. It was formerly thought that if a shrew-mouse ran over a person's feet, he would become lame in consequence. Its very name has been adopted as a term of reproach for a scolding woman, probably from the venom it was supposed to possess ; but Shakspeare has used it with terms of endearment :

" Pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Bless you, fair shrew."

Mr. Jesse has however explained the cause of great numbers of the shrew-mouse being found dead : they are very pugnacious, and the males fight together to the death, as proved by the livid spots found upon the neck and shoulders.

THE CAMEL.

Camels are very patient under thirst : it is a vulgar Error,

however, to believe that they can live any length of time without water. They generally pine, and die on the fourth day; and, with great heat, will even sink sooner.—*Lieut. Burnes's Travels in Bokhara.*

There is no reason for supposing this useful animal to be exclusively an inhabitant of the desert. The camels in European Turkey are indigenous, and are said to be of an excellent stock.

LONGEVITY OF THE DEER.

The traditional opinion that the Deer sometimes attains the age of upwards of a hundred years, is not worthy of countenance. In the superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, however, are some arguments in favour of the *longa et cervina senectus* of Juvenal; and the Gaelic adage, "Thrice the age of a man is that of a deer," is supported by marvellous stories, attested by chiefs of honour and veracity. With all his respect for marvellous traditions, Mr. Scrope, in his work on *Deer-stalking*, does not hesitate to inform us, that all the accounts he has received from park-keepers in England, where there are red-deer, contradict their supposed longevity, and establish the fact that the longest-lived deer has not exceeded twenty years of age.—*Edinburgh Review*, No. 143.

WOLVES IN ENGLAND.

The naturo-historical accounts of the Wolf tell us that it was extirpated in Britain by the salutary edicts of King Edgar, who accepted wolves' tongues and heads as tribute, or as a commutation for certain crimes. This appears to be a vulgar error; for in the reign of Edward I. wolves had increased to such a degree that officers were appointed to promote their destruction, and lands were held by hunting them and destroying them.

IS THE HYÆNA UNTAMABLE?—THE LAUGHING HYÆNA.

Colonel Sykes has taken some pains to correct the popular Error respecting the ferocious and untamable disposition of the hyæna. In India, the colonel possessed a female cub, which was allowed to run about the house, and would play with the sailors on board ship; indeed, it was as playful and good-humoured as a puppy. Subsequently Colonel Sykes placed this hyæna in the gardens of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park; and there, when full-grown, it fondly recognised its master by rubbing its head, neck, and back against his hand.—*Proc. Zool. Soc.* 1833.

Cuvier states, that in the day-time the cage of a striped hyæna may be entered with impunity, when it will fawn upon those it knows; "and, were it not for the prejudices of the

public on this subject, a hyæna thus tamed might be intrusted with as much liberty as a common dog."

"The laughing hyæna" may be traced to a belief among the Greeks and Romans that the hyæna could imitate the human voice, and charmed shepherds, so as to rivet them to the spot on which they stood.

Pliny, from the great strength of the hyæna's neck, believed it to consist of only one jointless bone; and further, he credited the efficacy of the neck in magical invocations. A relic of this superstition lingers among the Arabs, who, according to Shaw, when they kill a hyæna, bury the head, lest it should become the element of some charm against their safety and happiness.

THE ELEPHANT.

The Elephant has superstitiously been made an object of veneration, from an exaggerated notion of his intelligence. Indeed, he appears more sagacious than he really is, because the facial line, or the vertical height of the skull, when compared with its horizontal length, is elevated by causes which have no connection with the volume of the brain. The stories of elephants dancing upon ropes at Rome to gratify Nero and Galba, are examples of the above exaggeration. Sir Thomas Browne terms "grayheaded errors," the absurd notion that elephants had no joints and could not lie down, but slept against a tree, which being almost sawn asunder by the hunters, the beast fell with the tree, and was securely captured.

That elephants were formerly used in war is well known; but the common representation of the elephant bearing a castle, conveys a very erroneous notion of the mode. Sir Thomas Browne adds:

"Nor can we overlook the pictures of elephants with castles on their backs, made in the form of land castles, or stationary fortifications, and answerable unto the arms of Castile, or Sir John Old Castle; whereas the towers they bore were of wood, and girt unto their bodies; as is delivered in the books of *Maccabees*, and as they were appointed in the army of Antiochus."—*Vulgar Errors*, b. v. c. 19.

In an engraving of Kublai Khan in his wooden castle, borne upon the backs of four elephants, in the thirteenth century, the "castle" is of square shape, open at the sides, with a semicircular roof, bearing the imperial standard, and altogether more resembling a roofed howdah than a castle or fortress built of stone.

SLOW HORSES.

The horse-jockey runs his hand down the horse's neck in a knowing way, and says, "This horse has got a heavy shoulder: he is a Slow Horse." He is right; but he does not under-

stand the matter. It is not possible that the shoulder can be too much loaded with muscle ; for muscle is the source of motion, and bestows power. What the jockey feels, and forms his judgment on, is the abrupt transition from the neck to the shoulder, which, in a horse for the turf, ought to be a smooth, undulating surface. This abruptness, or prominence of the shoulder, is a consequence of the upright position of the scapula, or shoulder-blade : the sloping and light shoulder results from its obliquity. An upright shoulder is the mark of a stumbling horse : it does not revolve easily to throw forward the foot.—*Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise.*

WHITE-HOOFED HORSES.

The rejection of Horses with White Legs and Feet is mostly considered a matter of caprice, though the distinction is reasonable enough. Even in a wet soil and climate, white hoofs are more brittle and more liable to accident and lameness than black ones ; and in the stony and more arid soils and climates white hoofs do not stand nearly so well, and are much more liable to break and contract than those of a dark colour.—*Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise.*

THE VAMPIRE BAT

Has been accused of destroying men and animals by sucking their blood ; but “ the truth,” says Cuvier in his *Règne Animal*, “ appears to be that the Vampire inflicts only small wounds, which may probably become inflammatory and gangrenous from the influence of climate.” The old vampire superstition will be found detailed in a subsequent page.

THE “ HAWK AND HANDSAW.”

The wood or coppice where herons built was originally called the heronshaw, of which Mr. Jesse relates an instance in the heronry in Windsor Great Park. Hence the name was transferred to the bird itself, which was called heronshaw ; and thus the proverb, “ He does not know a Hawk from a Handsaw,” the meaning of which was, that, in a very distant flight, it was only an experienced eye that could distinguish the hawk from the heron.

CUCKOO-SPIT.

This is the white frothy exudation of the larvæ of the *Cicada spumaria*, or, according to Broukett, the *Tellicona spumaria*, which is seen at the axillæ of the leaves and branches of plants, particularly lavender and rosemary, early in the spring. The time of its appearance, and the vulgar notion that it is produced from the saliva of the cuckoo, have given

rise to the name, Cuckoo-spit. Hence also several wild-flowers, which are the favourite depositories of the froth of this delicate little insect, have received the name of *cuckoo-flowers*, as the *Cardamine pratensis* and *Lychnis dioica*. Frog-spit and toad-spit are other names for this spume.—*Miss Baker's Northamptonshire Glossary*.

A stupid fellow seeing this froth on almost every blade in his garden, wondered where all the cuckoos could be that produced it!

“PIGEONS’ MILK” AND “CROCODILE TEARS.”

Lactation by the crop of pigeons has been proved by naturalists; and Mr. Jesse considers that the crop is gradually thickened, and the glands enlarged, during the period of incubation in most birds, just as the milk-glands are prepared during gestation in mammalia: hence the curdy substance or milky secretion of pigeons; and Mr. Gulliver has shown that a process like that which takes place in the crop of pigeons has been discovered in the female crocodile. Thus the old popular saying about “Pigeons’ Milk,” which was a sort of April-fool’s errand, had some foundation for it, and proves that a degree of truth generally lurks in the adages of our ancestors. It may also possibly turn out that whatever horror people have of “Crocodile Tears,” the reptile secretes the bland milk for its tender young.

MIGRATION OF BIRDS.—“THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.”

Seven of the migratory birds were formerly called “the Seven Sleepers,” because it was then supposed that many birds, which it is now well known unquestionably migrate, retired to some secure retreat, and there remained dormant during the winter.

Mr. Yarrell, in his excellent work on British birds, proves that the common quail (*Coturnus dactylisonans*) was the food of the Israelites in the wilderness. It is the only species that migrates in enormous multitudes, or indeed that migrates at all. The instinct of the bird was therefore made use of by the Almighty to supply the wants of His famishing people; “and it affords,” says Mr. Yarrell, “a proof of the perpetuation of an instinct through a period of 3000 years.” It does not pervade a whole species, but that part of a species existing within certain geographical limits; an instinct characterised by a peculiarity, which modern observers have also noticed, of making their migratory flight by night. We read in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus: “And it came to pass that at even (probably night) the quails came up and covered the camp.” Thus we see the most ancient of all historical works and natural history each throwing light on the other.

WHAT BECOMES OF SWALLOWS IN WINTER?

The winter retreat of these migrating birds is a subject which

has excited among naturalists much interesting speculation, and has been suggestive of many ingenious theories. Among other hypotheses, that of subaqueous hybernation, though partially supported by well-attested facts, can hardly be said to be admissible, except only so far as regards subaqueous descent or temporary submersion. The capability of the swallow for existence under water for any lengthened period during the winter is inconceivable. The possibility of such a state has been sufficiently objected to on the ground of the necessary decomposition and destruction of its extravascular plumage, as well as from the fact, that no warm-blooded or quick-breathing animal either can or does so hybernate. In partial support, however, of the theory, is the following remarkable instance of the subaqueous residence (or what appeared to have been such) of two swallows, under circumstances which indicated a trance, or torpor, of some duration :

“On the 2d of November 1829, at Loch Ransa, in the island of Arran, a man, while digging in a place where a pond had been lately drained off, discovered two swallows in a state of torpor. On placing them near the fire, they recovered.”—*Bishop Stanley's History of Birds.*

Similar instances of the dormant habitation of birds in mud deposits and manure heaps during the winter season, and of their re-animation on being brought into a higher temperature, are also on record. Gilbert White believed that swallows “do not depart from this island, but lay themselves up in holes and caverns ; and do, insect-like and bat-like, come forth at mild times, and then retire again to their *latebræ*.” The Rev. Mr. Fleming thus combats the probability of submersion :

Because swallows are much lighter than water, and could not sink in clusters, as they are represented to do. If their feathers are previously wetted, to destroy their buoyant power, in what manner can they resist the decomposing effect of six months' maceration in water, and appear in spring as fresh and glossy as those of other birds ? Swallows do not moult while they remain with us in an active state ; so that, if they submerge, they either do not moult at all, or perform the process under water. In the case of other torpid animals, some vital actions are performed, and a portion of oxygen is consumed ; but in the submerged swallows, respiration, and consequently circulation, must cease. Other torpid animals too, in retiring to their winter slumbers, consult safety ; while the swallow, in sinking under the water, rushes to the place where the otter and the pike commit their depredations.

It is now ascertained that migration is, in ordinary cases, practised by swallows ; yet their submersion has been believed by many naturalists ; such as Klein, Linnæus, and others.

Montague considers the idea of the submersion of the swallow too extravagant to need refutation. Still, the belief that the swallows hide themselves during the winter at the bottom of rivers and lakes is prevalent to this day in some parts of England ; and Mr. Jesse was assured upon credible autho-

rity, that a person in the neighbourhood of Grassmere Lake had seen swallows emerging from it.

Wilson estimates the swallow to fly, in his usual way, at the rate of one mile in a minute ; and he is so engaged for ten hours every day.

OF WHAT USE ARE SPARROWS?

Clubs have been formed in various parts of the country for the destruction of Sparrows, in consequence of their consumption of ripe crops. Now granting the harm to be considerable, the farmer is more than compensated by the benefits of the bird ; actual and careful observation proving that the sparrow is most useful in killing, for food, flies, caterpillars, wire-worms, &c., which commit immense ravages among the products of the land. It has been calculated that a single pair of sparrows, during the time they have their young to feed, destroy above three thousand three hundred caterpillars in a week, besides other insects. A colony of sparrows having been broken up, serious loss was sustained from caterpillars ; and where, after the sparrows were allowed to return, no trouble or injury from that insect was experienced.

Mr. John Hawley of Doncaster, in the *Zoologist*, thus states the case : "I have watched pairs of sparrows repeatedly feeding their young, and have found that they bring food to the nest once in ten minutes during at least six hours of the twenty-four, and that each time from two to six caterpillars are brought : every naturalist will know this to be under the mark. Now suppose the 'three thousand five hundred sparrows' destroyed by the 'Association for killing Sparrows' were to have been alive the next spring, each pair to have built a nest, and reared successive broods of young, during three months, we have, at the rate of two hundred and fifty-two thousand per day, the enormous multitude of twenty-one millions one hundred and sixty-eight thousand larvæ prevented from destroying the products of the land, and from increasing their numbers from fifty to five-hundred fold !"

Mr. Jesse, in his *Country Life*, relates that a Correspondent has attached to his garden a fruit-plantation of three acres, containing gooseberries, currants, raspberries, cherries, apples, pears, plums, &c., and that *he never allows birds to be destroyed or their nests taken*. The consequence is, that he is never annoyed with caterpillars. Mr. Jesse adds, that about two miles from his residence there is "a small-bird club," the members of which are bound to produce a certain number of small birds every week. Each year the caterpillars devastate the plantations ; and in one year an apple-orchard of more than ten acres was so infested, that the owner employed women to pick off every blossom in order to save the trees.

THE BIRD OF PARADISE.

This bird being worn as an ornament, on account of its

beautiful plumage, when sold for such purpose has its feet cut off by the Papous of New Guinea, which led our credulous forefathers to believe the feet to be actually wanting in the bird.—(*J. R. Forster on Paradise Birds and the Phœnix; Indian Zoology, Halle, 1795, b. 26.*) This belief may likewise have been fostered in casual observers by the peculiar habit which the Paradise Bird has of shunning the bottom of its cage, as if afraid of soiling its delicate plumage; although, like the crow (which it resembles in many respects), it has feet formed for walking.

Besides the absence of legs, the following wonders were once credited of this bird: That the egg was laid in the air, and there hatched by the male in an orifice of his body; that it hung itself by the two long feathers of its tail on a tree when sleeping; that it never touched the ground during any period of its existence, and fed wholly on dew. The Indians also believe that the leader or king of the bird-of-paradise is black with red spots, and that he soars away with the rest of the flock; which, however, never quit him, but settle where he does.

TURTLE-DOVES.

Although the poets have adopted these birds as emblems of faithfulness in love, Blumenbach assures us, that “as to its highly-prized fidelity and chastity, setting aside idle fables, the Turtle-dove presents nothing superior to other birds which lead the same mode of life.”

SWANS.

“The Swan with two Necks” tavern sign would lead weak persons to credit such an anomaly; whereas it is in itself a corruption of “two nicks,” or notches, on the bill, by which means swans were formerly marked by their owners. But this custom becoming almost obsolete, and the term not being understood, the sign-painter invented the two-necked bird.

The “swan-hopping” of the London citizens is a corruption of *swan-upping*, or the taking up of swans on the river Thames.

THE TURKEY.

Our name for this bird is very absurd, since it conveys the false idea that the Turkey originated in Europe or Asia; whereas we have derived the bird through the intermedium of Spain, or direct from North America, and it was first brought to England by Turkey merchants. It has been suggested that the name Turkey was given to the bird in the same way that we apply the term Goth to men of rude and barbarous habits, or inasmuch as it was a strange foreigner, and very irascible; or perhaps because of the beard (the pectoral tuft of the male).

Its introduction into England dates from 1524.—See *Things not generally Known*, pp. 129, 130.

THE PELICAN.

Sir Thomas Browne says :

“In every place we meet with the picture of the Pelican opening her breast with her bill, and feeding her young ones with the blood distilling from her. Thus it is set forth, not only in common signs, but in the crest and scutcheon of many noble families ; hath been asserted by many holy writers, and was an hieroglyphic of piety and pity among the Egyptians ; on which consideration they spared them at their tables.”—*Vulgar Errors*, b. v. c. 1.

Sir Thomas refers this popular error to an exaggerated description of the pelican's fondness for her young, and is inclined to accept it as an emblem “in coat-armour,” though with great doubt.

By reference to the actual economy of the pelican, we find that, in feeding the nestlings,—and the male is said to supply the wants of the female when sitting in the same manner,—the under mandible is pressed against the neck and breast, to assist the bird in disgorging the contents of the capacious pouch ; and during this action the red nail of the upper mandible would appear to come in contact with the breast, thus laying the foundation, in all probability, for the fable that the pelican nourishes her young with her blood, and for the attitude in which the imagination of painters has placed the bird in books of emblems, &c., with the blood spirting from the wounds made by the terminating nail of the upper mandible into the gaping mouths of her offspring.

In *A Choice of Emblems and other Devices*, by Geoffrey Whitney, 1856, beneath the cut are the following lines :

“The pelican, for to revive her younge,
Doth pierce her breste, and geve them of her blood.
Then searche your breste, and as you have with tonge,
With penne procede to do your countrie good :
Your zeal is great, your learning is profounde ;
Then help our wantes with that you do abound.”

Shakspeare, in *Hamlet*, thus alludes to the popular notion :

“To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms ;
And like the kind, life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.”

Sir Thomas Browne hints at the probability of the pelican occasionally nibbling or biting itself on the itching part of its breast, upon fulness or acrimony of blood, so as to tinge the feathers in that part. Such an instance is recorded by Mr. G. Bennett of a pelican living at Dulwich, which wounded itself just above the breast ; but no such act has been observed among the pelicans kept in the menagerie of the Zoological

Society or elsewhere; and the instance just recorded was probably caused by local irritation.

THE GOAT-SUCKER.

The term Goat-sucker has been vernacularly applied to the European night-jar or night-swallow, from the absurd idea of this bird sucking goats; whereas, according to Mr. Rennie, "it is as impossible for the night-jar to suck the teats of cattle (though most birds are fond of milk) as it is for cats to suck the breath from sucking infants, of which they are popularly accused."

THE NIGHTINGALE.

It is a vulgar error to suppose that the song of the Nightingale is melancholy, and that it only sings by night. There are two varieties of the nightingale: one which sings both in the night and day, and one which sings in the day only.—*M. Wichterich of Bonn.*

HUMMING-BIRDS.

These splendid birds have generally been stated to feed only on the juice of flowers; whereas it has been proved that they eat insects, and that the chief object of their fluttering about flowers is more for the purpose of their obtaining insect food than for the alleged object of sucking the honey from the nectaries of the plants.—*Prof. Traill; Trans. Wernerian Society, 1840.*

SINGING-BIRDS IN THE OLD AND NEW WORLD.

It is a very unfounded notion, that in the New World the brilliant hues of the bird take the place of the power of song. On the contrary, it would appear from Wilson's *American Ornithology* that the American song-birds are infinitely more numerous than those of Europe, and many of them superior to our most celebrated songsters.

THE HALCYON.

It was anciently believed that during the *Halcyon Days*, or that time when the halcyon, or kingfisher, is engaged in hatching her eggs, the sea, in kindness to her, remained so smooth and calm, that the mariner might venture on the main with the happy certainty of not being exposed to storms or tempests.

"The halcyones," says Pliny, "are of a great name and much marked. The very seas, and they that sail thereupon, know well when they sit and breed. * * * * They lay and sit about midwinter, when daies be shortest; and the time whiles they are broodie is called the *halcyon daies*, for during that season the sea is calme and navigable, especialie in the coast of Sicilie. In other parts also the sea is not so boisterous, but more

quiet than at other times; but surely the Sicilian sea is very gentle, both in the straights and also in the open ocean."—(*Pliny's Natural History, by Holland, p. 287.*) Aristotle, however, seems to be the first writer who asserts that during the halcyon days the mariner may sail in perfect security.—(*Aristotle's Hist. Anim. p. 541.*) Since his time, the poets have carefully, though not wisely, cherished the superstition.

————— "Alcyone compress'd
Seven days sits brooding on her watery nest,
A wintry queen; her sire at length is kind,
Calms every storm and hushes every wind."

Ovid Metam. lib. xi. translated by Dryden.

"May halcyons smooth the waves and calm the seas,
And the rough south-east sink into a breeze;
Halcyons, of all the birds that haunt the main,
Most lov'd and honour'd by the Nereid train."

Theocritus, idyl vii. l. 57, translated by Fawkes.

"Blow, but gently blow fayre winde
From the forsaken shore,
And be as to the halcyon kinde
'Till we have ferried o'er."—*W. Browne.*

Montaigne believes that "Nature has honoured no other animal so much during its sitting and disclosing; for that the whole ocean is stayed, and smoothed without waves, without winds or rain, whilst the halcyon broods upon her young, which is just about the winter solstice; so that by her priviledge, we have seven dayes and seven nights, in the very heart of winter, wherein we may sail without danger."

The Earl of Kent, in *King Lear*, speaks of rogues who

————— "turn their halcyon beaks
With every gale and vary of their masters." (ii. 1.)

This is an allusion to the old superstitious belief that a dead kingfisher, suspended from a cord, would always turn its beak to the direction from whence the wind blew. The earliest mention of this, after Shakspeare's allusion, seems to be in Marlow's *Jew of Malta*, 1633:

"But how now stands the wind?
Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill?"

"I have once or twice," says Mrs. Charlotte Smith, "seen a stuffed bird of this species hung up to the beam of a cottage-ceiling, and imagined that the beauty of the feathers had recommended it to this sad pre-eminence; till, on inquiry, I was assured that it served the purpose of a weather vane, and though sheltered from the immediate influence of the wind, never failed to show every change by turning its beak to the quarter whence the wind blew."

The kingfisher is held in great estimation in many parts of

France, where it is also considered to be a natural weathercock. This bird is likewise said to be endowed with the precious gift of enriching its possessor, of preserving harmony in families, and of imparting beauty to women who wear its feathers. The kingfisher's fame has travelled into Tartary, where the inhabitants almost adore the bird. They eagerly collect its plumage, and throwing the feathers into a vase of water, preserve those that float, believing that it is quite sufficient for a woman to touch one of them to make her love the wearer. A Tartar, if he be fortunate enough to own a kingfisher, carefully preserves the beak, claws, and skin, when it dies, and puts them in a purse: as long as he carries these relics on his person, he is secure against any misfortune.—*Dickens's Household Words.*

“ THAT THE OSTRICH DIGESTETH IRON.”

The notion so generally entertained of the Ostrich merely depositing her eggs in the sand, and leaving them to be vivified by the sun, arises probably from the bird's habit of occasionally quitting the nest in search of food, more especially as it generally does so during the hottest part of the day.

Some travellers affirm that the ostrich not only never sits on her eggs after they have once been handled, or even if a man should have passed near the nest, but that she actually destroys them!

The testimony upon this point is contradictory. It seems pretty certain, however, that the ostrich, as with many other birds, is in the habit of deserting her eggs if they have been handled. “The slaves,” says Professor Thunberg, “always use the precaution not to take away the eggs with their hands (in which case the birds, who perceive it by scent, are apt to quit the spot); but by means of a long stick they rake them out of the nest as fast as the birds lay them.”

“That the ostrich digesteth iron,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “is confirmed by the affirmations of many: the common picture also confirmeth it, which usually describeth this animal with a horse-shoe in its mouth. But Aristotle and Oppianus either omit this singularity as dubious, or, as the comment saith, reject it as fabulous. Pliny only affirms the digestion of the ostrich to be wonderful; Ælian states that it digests stones, without any mention of iron. Some have experimentally refuted it, as Albertus Magnus and Ulysses Aldrovandus. Browne then argues that the ostrich may swallow iron to aid its digestion, as poultry, and more especially the turkey, take down stones, which rather concur unto digestion than are themselves digested.”

Thus dogs will eat grass, which they digest not; thus camels, to

make the water sapid, do raise the mud with their feet; thus horses will knable (nibble) at walls; pigeons delight in salt stones; rats will knaw iron, and Aristotle saith the elephant swalloweth stones: and thus may also the ostrich swallow iron, not as his proper aliment, but for the ends above expressed, and even as we observe the like in other animals.—*Vulgar Errors*, b. iii. c. 22.

Cuvier states that the ostrich is so voracious, and its senses of taste and smell are so obtuse, that it devours animal and mineral substances indiscriminately, until its enormous stomach is completely full. It swallows without any choice,—and merely as it were for ballast,—wood, stones, iron, copper, gold, lime, or, in fact, any other substance equally hard, indigestible, and deleterious. This strange propensity obtained for the bird at a very early period the epithet of “the iron-eating ostrich:”

The ostridge that will eate
An horse-showe so great
In the steade of meat;
Such fervent heat
His stomach doth freat.

The Boke of Philip Sparrow.

Sir Hamon L'Estrange, in discussing the story of the ostrich swallowing iron, mentions having seen one eat pellets of chewed paper as large as a walnut. He relates, as a parallel, having seen, about 1638, in London, a dodo which swallowed “large pebble stones, some as big as nutmegs.” He goes on to mention other instances of birds swallowing stones, &c., for the same purpose, which he concludes to be the most probable solution of the alleged fact that the ostrich (or ostridge, as he calls it) swallows iron.

THE HERRING.

More nonsense has been uttered about the Herring than about all the other fish, flesh, and fowl in creation. The exposure of these fallacies has been thus ably handled in *The Times* journal:

If Sir Thomas Browne were now alive, he might write another volume on *Vulgar Errors* all about the herring; for it illustrates absurdities of almost every kind—scientific, historical, commercial, and political. It is an imposing little animal that has befooled us for a couple of centuries. We have been eating him ever so long; but all this time we know nothing about the little vagrant, and in books of recognised authority we find statements with regard to its habits that are quite as apocryphal as the old story which Gilbert White contests so vehemently about swallows in the winter migrating to the bottom of rivers, where they spend their time in a torpid slumber. The naturalists declare that the herring goes to the Arctic seas to spawn, and there remains for months afterwards in order to recruit its strength; we might cite works of high authority in which that tradition is to this very day and in latest editions handed down. It is all nonsense: the herring never leaves our shores. Next to the fictitious gossip regarding the migrations of this little fish are the curious stories of the wealth which it has

created, and of its vast importance to human welfare. We hear of Amsterdam being built on herring-bones, and that every fifth inhabitant of Holland was at one time engaged in the herring-fishery. This, too, is a ridiculous hoax. Amsterdam is built on something far more precious than herring-bones; and it has been calculated that if the tales current with regard to the Dutch trade in herrings be correct, then every able-bodied man in the country must have been engaged in the business.

Our herring-fisheries are now a valuable property, in which altogether from two to three millions of money are sunk, about half a million being sunk in boats, nets, and lines alone. In many parts of Scotland a hundred herrings can be purchased for sixpence. The Scotch-cured herrings have a large sale on the Continent, and in some places are even superseding the Dutch.*

COLOURS OF THE DOLPHIN.

The changes of hue displayed by the dying Dolphin are peculiar; but have been much exaggerated by the poetical descriptions of travellers. Soon after the fish has been removed from the water, the bright yellow with rich blue spots, which constitutes the normal colour of the animal, is exchanged for a brilliant silver, which a short time after death passes into a dull gray, or lead colour. The original golden hue occasionally revives in a partial manner, and appears above the silver field, producing a very interesting display of colours; but the diversity of tints is not greater than here described.—*Bennett's Narrative of a Whaling Voyage round the Globe.*

CRAB'S EYES.

The two rounded masses, one on each side of the stomach of the crab, have received the absurd name of "Crab's Eyes." Nothing can be more erroneous; these same masses being magazines of carbonate of lime, which the crab has collected for forming itself a new shell.

THE JOHN DORY.

Sir Joseph Banks's observation, that the name of this fish should be "*adorée*," from its being worshipped, is needlessly far-fetched. In all the Italian ports it is called *Janitore*, or the gatekeeper, by which title St. Peter is most commonly designated among Roman Catholics, as being keeper of the keys of Heaven. In this respect, the name tallies with the superstitious legend of this being the fish out of whose mouth the Apostle

* In 1856, Alexander II., Emperor of Russia, in his visit to Finland, after leaving Helsingfors, went to the little town of Borgo, where he laid with great ceremony the first stone of a monument to the fisherman Beukels, of Biervliet, in Flanders, who in the fourteenth century discovered the art of salting and packing herrings; and who, after introducing it into his own country, went into Finland, and established it there, from whence it spread to all the Baltic provinces. Beukels died in Flanders, and the Emperor Charles V. once visited his tomb. Peter the Great gave a pension to one of his descendants.

took the tribute-money. The breast of the animal is certainly much flattened ; but, unfortunately for the credit of the monks, this feature is exhibited in equally strong lineaments by at least twenty other varieties of fish.

As for the name, the English sailors naturally substituted John Dory for the Italian Janitore.

WHAT ARE PEARLS ?

The ancient opinion appears to have been, that Pearls were formed by drops of dew falling into the shell, for which purpose it periodically rose to the surface ; and Pliny gravely informs us, that if the atmosphere was thick at the time, they were dark and clouded ; if it was clear, they were white and brilliant. It is singular that the same belief is found to prevail at the present day among the natives of Ceylon ; and very similar to it is the account of the formation of pearls recorded in one of the Sanscrit books of the Brahmins. A similar fancy also exists in the interior of Hindostan. Many odd things are thus related of pearls by D. T. D. Macgowan, of Ningpo.

The facility with which the Dual theory may be applied to phenomena of nature, enables Chinese philosophers to explain very satisfactorily to themselves whatever comes under their observation. Pearls are summarily disposed of as the female portion of the male principle, or more briefly as the female principle of muscles. They are regarded as a charm against fire, and are supposed to abound when good emperors reign. Buddhist authors say that they come from the brain of the fabled dragon, and give various Indian legends respecting monf (money ?) pearls, the light of which was so strong that rice could be cooked by them. The Tauists, who, like our mediæval alchymists, long sought to discover a method of transmuting metals, and who too were in eager quest of the elixir of immortality, tried many experiments with pearls, which frequently formed an ingredient in the formula for conferring perpetual youth. The following is from a standard authority : "Take a pearl which has been worn on the body a long time, of an inch or more long ; steep it in wort, and it will dissolve like quicksilver : or use floating (pumice ?) stones and honey-comb, and mix with the gall of a serpent, and the pearl may be drawn out to the length of three or four feet. Make it into pills, and swallow them, henceforth food will be unnecessary ;" immortality will have been attained. It is not long since that pearls ceased to be used in the West as a medicine ; and, as might be expected, they still hold an important place in the *Materia Medica* of China.

Amidst many puerile and superstitious notions regarding the nature of pearls, we meet with a shrewd old writer, who had at least an idea of their true character ; for he states that they are the result of a diseased action in the shell, anticipating the discovery of Linnæus, as the latter anticipated the rediscovery of Sir Everard Home, of their being "the abortive eggs of oysters, enveloped in their own nacre." This, however, accounts only for those found within the mantle : those which are attached to, or in contact with the shell, are occasioned by the intrusion of foreign bodies, and resemble exostosis in animals of a higher degree of organisation.

Pearls, from their consisting of carbonate of lime, are, of course, very soluble in acids. Hence may have originated the account of Cleopatra dissolving a pearl in vinegar, and drinking it to Marc Antony's health at supper ; which is now regarded as an historical fiction, to show the inventive talents of the voluptuous queen in her allurements for Antony, in whom she found a companion to her taste. It is, however, pretty certain that a pearl, or pearls, of great value, were in Cleopatra's possession.

"How artificial Pearls are formed" will be found described in *Things not generally Known*, p. 86.

LUCK OF CRICKETS.

It is singular that the House-Cricket should by some weak persons be considered an unlucky, and by others a lucky, inmate of a dwelling : those who hold the latter opinion, consider its destruction the means of bringing misfortune on their habitations.

"In Dumfriesshire," says Sir William Jardine, "it is a common superstition, that if crickets forsake a house which they have long inhabited, some evil will befall the family ; generally, the death of some member is portended. In like manner, the presence or return of this cheerful little insect is lucky, and portends some good to the family."

LIGHT OF THE LANTERN-FLY.

Many years since, Madame Merian, in her splendid work on the *Insects of Surinam*, stated that the Lantern-fly emitted light strong enough from its lantern-like head to read a newspaper by. This was too pretty a phenomenon to be omitted from any succeeding account of the insect. But according to the more recent observations of M. Richard and M. Sieber, and our countryman Dr. Hancock, the whole statement is erroneous : even the native tribes of Guiana agree in treating the story as fabulous ; and Dr. Hancock has stated to the Zoological Society, that "it seemed to be an invention of Europeans, desirous of assigning a use to the singular diaphanous projection, resembling a horn-lantern, in front of the head of the insect." Yet Mr. John Murray, F.L.S., asserts, that he has read a letter by the exclusive light of the *lampyris noctiluca*, another luminous insect ; and that in a dark night he once picked up a *lampyris splendida*, which showed him distinctly the hour by a watch.

THE BIRD-KILLING SPIDER.

The story of a Spider which catches and devours Birds is likewise believed to have had its origin with Madame Merian, in her work on the *Insects of Surinam*. The naturalists Oviedo, Labat, and Rochefort, do not mention any spider as possessing such habits ; the two latter writers only stating, that in the

Bermudas there exists a spider which makes nets strong enough to entangle small birds. Madame Merian, however, asserts, that one spider not only catches, but devours, small birds ; and has figured a spider in the act of preying on a humming-bird. Now this particular kind of spider does not spin a net, but resides in tubes under ground, and in all its movements keeps close to the earth ; while humming-birds never perch except on branches. A living humming-bird, when placed in one of the spider's tubes, was not only not eaten by the spider, but the latter actually quitted its hole, which it left in possession of an intruding bird. A geometrical web, spun by the largest spider that spins in the West Indies may perhaps occasionally be strong enough to catch the smaller among the humming-birds ; but it is not likely that the spider would eat the birds. A small species of lizard, introduced into one of these nets, was enveloped in the usual manner by the spider ; but as soon as the operation was completed, the insect cut the line and allowed the prisoner to fall to the ground. The existence of any Bird-killing Spider is consequently disbelieved by the distinguished naturalist Mr. Mac Leay, who has reported these interesting facts to the Zoological Society.

The spider to which Madame Merian attributes this bird-killing propensity, in the night-time destroys the cockroaches in the houses at Surinam. It is never killed by the negroes, who believe that if they were to destroy this spider, it would cause them to break cups and glasses. Thus an absurd superstition serves to protect a useful creature.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S LOCUSTS.

When the Locust-tree is named, and its pods are said to be a palatable article of food, an impression is very commonly made on the mind of the hearer who has forgotten his Greek that this vegetable locust must have been the food on which, with wild honey, John the Baptist lived in the wilderness ; and persons often lament their stupidity in having ever supposed that it could have been a nasty insect : but such it was. "And his food was locusts (*akrides*) and wild honey." Bochart has proved that the insect locusts have been eaten by many nations in Africa and Asia, both in ancient and modern times. There is, indeed, no doubt about the word *akris*, which means the insect ; and the mistake has arisen from the English names alone. The word *arbah*, or locust, of the Old Testament, is translated *akris* in the Septuagint Greek.

BEETLES AND THE LIGHT.

Kitchen Beetles are always said to shun the light, because they run away when a lighted candle is brought into the room ;

but this is a mistake which arises from a false reasoning, and it is always well to reason correctly, even about kitchen beetles. It is not by the candle that they are scared, but by the noise and motion which accompany the candle; for when there is neither noise nor motion they will come forth freely, whether it is light or dark, though perhaps more freely during motionless and silent darkness. Strictly speaking, however, it will be found that although they may be sometimes scared by a sudden light, the real cause of alarm in every case is motion, that produces vibration in the floor or other place on which they may happen to be, mere noise having as little effect on them as mere light.—*Jesse's Country Life*, page 301.

The term "black" applied to beetles would appear to be an epithet of disgust; for they are never black, but always brown, though of different shades, darker in the full-grown than in the younger and smaller.*.

THE TARANTULA SPIDER.

Sir Thomas Browne gravely says:

"Some doubt many have of the Tarantula, or poisonous spider of Calabria, and the magical cure of the bite thereof by music. But since we observe that many attest it from experience; since the learned Kircherius hath positively averred it, and set down the songs and tunes solemnly used for it; since also some affirm the tarantula itself will dance upon certain strokes, whereby they set their instruments against its poison,—we shall not at all question it."—*Vulgar Errors*, b. iii. c. 27.

Many years since, an Italian gentleman communicated to Stephen Storace, the celebrated musician, a circumstantial account of the effect of the bite of a tarantula upon a poor ploughman, and its cure by the tune called "the Tarantella" being played to him, when, after dancing wildly till he was exhausted, he was bled and put to bed, and so recovered; the latter treatment having doubtless far more to do with his recovery than the music. Still, the narrator states that, not knowing the air of "the Tarantella," he tried several jigs, but to no purpose; for the man was as motionless as before until he caught the proper air.

Blumenbach gives the following explanation of the mystery:

"The fable of the supposed inevitable consequence of the bite, and of the cure by music, may be explained by supposing that travellers of easy faith have been deceived, partly by the representations of hypochondriacal and hysterical patients, but more commonly by the artifices of beggars. This much is certain, that this spider, which lives in little holes in fields, may inconvenience the reapers by its bite during harvest; and that, like that of many other insects, its bite may in the heat of summer become dangerous, and even cause a kind of *chorea* (St. Vitus's dance)."—*Manual of Natural History*.

* See "Soy made from Black-Beetles," p. 80.

From this bite sprang the tarantula dancing-mania of Apulia, thus described by Mr. Madden, in his *Phantasmata*, 1857 :

“The Apulian mania for dancing may be regarded as of a much earlier date than any notices of it as a distinct disease in the works of writers of the 15th century. There can be little doubt that a venomous spider exists in the South of Italy, the bite of which produces disorders of the nervous system with violent convulsive movements. This was only noticed in the 15th century by medical men. But long before the disease was described by Perotti, a dancing-mania existed in some parts of Apulia and Calabria. This disease may have been a remnant of the dance of St. Vitus of the Germans and Belgians of 1374, or of the children of Erfurt in 1237. But there is no reasonable ground for doubting that a disease of a very similar character was occasioned in Apulia by the bite of a venomous spider. And it appears equally certain that, independent of the venomous bite of the spider, the disease was spontaneously produced in a vast number of cases by the workings of the human mind. In periods of great fanaticism or times of signal pestilential calamity, the disorder might and did arise alone from the force of imagination and the instinct of imitation. Kircher's statement, moreover, that after a person was bit by the venomous spider, although he was affected by depression of spirits, or general feelings of malaise, the violent paroxysm of the rage for dancing did not usually occur till the following summer season, when the great heat set in, would tend very strongly to confirm the opinion, that if the traditions of the German and Belgian plague-dance of an earlier period did not exist, that phase of *tarantism* which was marked by a rage for dancing would not have been observed.

It is far more easy to understand how the force of imagination and the instinct of imagination would have produced it, than to comprehend how the virus of a venomous insect would have remained dormant in a bitten person for several months ; or, as according to Kircher's account it might do, for a year.”

Nevertheless death from the bite of this spider is not uncommon. In 1855, a child died from the bite of a very venomous species of tarantula, which is common in old thatched houses in Graham's Town, Southern Africa ; and similar cases have occurred in the Crimea, South Russia.

PROVIDENCE OF THE ANT.

The Ant has been celebrated from the earliest ages, both by sacred and profane writers, as a pattern of prudence, foresight, wisdom, and diligence. But in reading what the ancients say on this subject, we must be careful to separate truth from error. Who does not smile when he reads of ants that emulate the wolf in size, the dog in shape, the lion in its feet, the leopard in its skin,—ants whose employment is to mine for gold, and from whose vagrance the furtive Indian is constrained to fly on the swift camel's back ?—*Bochart*.

Writers of all nations and ages affirm that ants store up grain in their nests ; but close observers prove that no such hoards are made by European ants, who, indeed, have no magazines in their nests in which provisions of any kind have been

stored up. It is therefore surmised that the ancients, observing the ants carrying about their *pupæ*, which in shape, size, and colour, not a little resemble a grain of corn, mistook the one for the other. Mr. Gould was one of the first historians of ants who discovered that they do not store up corn; and naturalists have since subscribed to that opinion. Exotic ants have, however, probably magazines of provisions; for although ants, in our cold winters, remain in a state of torpidity, and have no need of food, yet in warmer regions, during the rainy seasons, when they are confined to their nests, a store of provisions may be necessary for them. This supposition has been verified by Colonel Sykes's discovery at Poona, in India, of a species of ants storing up the seeds of grass, and taking them out of the nest to dry, after a wet season.—*Trans. Ent. Soc.*

Solomon's lesson to the sluggard has been generally adduced as a strong confirmation of the ancient opinion; and it may apply to the ants of a warm climate, although it does not to those of a cold one. Still, Kirby and Spence do not consider Solomon's interpretation to apply to the storing up of provisions, but rather to the gathering of food in summer and harvest, when it is most plentiful; a foresight applicable to our European as well as to foreign species.

KEEPING BEES.

It has been the custom from time immemorial to rub the inside of the hive with salt and clover, or some sweet-scented herb, previously to putting a swarm of Bees into the hive. This practice, which is thought to be serviceable to the bees, is disadvantageous to them; for it gives them unnecessary labour, as they will be compelled to remove every particle of foreign matter from the hive before they begin to work. Equally reprehensible is the vile practice of making an astounding noise with fire-pans, kettles, &c., when the bees are swarming. It may have originated in some ancient superstition, or it may have been the signal to call aid from the fields to assist in the hiving. If harmless, it is unnecessary; and every thing that tends to encumber the management of bees should be avoided.

To enumerate the Errors and superstitions respecting bees would occupy several pages; so that we can only relate a few instances. In some parts, when any one of the family is buried, as the corpse passes out of the house every hive is loosened and lifted up; otherwise it is believed that the bees would die, or desert the hive, and seek other quarters. Another mode of communicating the intelligence to the little community with due form and ceremony, is to take the key of the house, and knock with it three times against the hive, telling the inmates at the same time that the master or mistress, as

the case may be, is dead ! In Bedfordshire, it is not uncommon for the peasantry to sing a psalm in front of hives of bees which are not doing well, after which they are believed to thrive !

In some districts of Brittany, it is believed that if the hard-working bees are not informed of the events which interest their masters, nothing goes right afterwards about the house. It is on this account that, when any one in a family dies, the peasants fasten a bit of black cloth to the hive, or a bit of red if a marriage takes place.

See "the Cell of the Bee," and "Mistakes in Beehives," in *Things not generally Known*, pp. 90 and 208.

THE HEDGE-HOG SUCKING COWS.

The idle story that the persecuted Hedge-hog sucks Cows is thus quaintly refuted :

In the case of an animal giving suck, "the teat is embraced round by the mouth of the young one, so that no air can pass between ; a vacuum is made, or the air is exhausted from its throat, by a power in the lungs ; nevertheless the pressure of the air remains still upon the outside of the dug of the mother, and by these two causes together the milk is forced into the mouth of the young one. But a hedge-hog has no such mouth as to be able to contain the teat of a cow ; therefore any vacuum which is caused in its own throat cannot be communicated to the milk in the dug. And if he is able to procure no other food but what he can get by sucking cows in the night, there is likely to be a vacuum in his stomach too."—*New Catalogue of Vulgar Errors*. By Stephen Fovargue. A.M., 1786.

Yet, according to Sir William Jardine, the hedge-hog is very fond of eggs ; and is consequently mischievous in the game-preserve and hen-house.

SIGHT OF THE CROCODILE.

Pliny, like other authors, has been led into a common Error, that the sight of the Crocodile is defective under water, which a moment's consideration, without the necessity of *personal* experience, should have corrected ; for it is at least reasonable to suppose that an animal living chiefly on fish should, in order to secure its prey, be gifted with an equal power of sight ; and that of fish cannot be said to be defective : but Herodotus, the *father* of these Errors, affirms that it is totally "blind under water."

The crocodile covers its eye at pleasure with the incitating membrane. It has no tongue, and moves the upper jaw. It does not run very quick, but can turn round in an instant.—*Wilkinson's General View of Egypt*.

Fabulous Animals.

THE PHOENIX.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE devotes a chapter to the ancient history of this “wonder of the world,” commencing—

“That there is but one Phoenix in the world, which after many hundred years burneth itself, and from the ashes thereof ariseth up another, is a conceit not new, or altogether popular, but of great antiquity; not only delivered by humane authority, but frequently expressed also by holy writers. . . . All which notwithstanding, we cannot presume the existence of this animal; nor dare we affirm there is any phoenix in nature.”

Sir Thomas then shows there to be no “ocular describer;” and that Herodotus, who “led the story unto the Greeks, plainly saith he never attained the sight of any, but only in the picture.” A number of erudite guesses are added; such as, “that the phoenix was a bird of Paradise, and alike the emblem of the Resurrection and the Sun:” again, “that it was a palm-tree, and that it was only a mistake upon the homonymy of the Greek word *pænix*, which signifies also a palm-tree.” The common story may be told in a few words:—The phoenix was thought to abide one hundred years in the deserts of Arabia; and at the expiration of that period to appear in the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, fall upon the blazing altar, and during its cremation, pour forth a melodious song from, or through, the orifices of its feathers, which thus formed a thousand organ-pipes: the feathers of the belly and breast being reported of a gold colour.

This fable has been attempted to be explained by the supposition, that in warm countries, where sacrifices usually took place in the open air, many birds of prey, particularly vultures, undeterred by the fire and smoke of the altars, have dropped down, impelled by hunger, to seize the raw flesh laid upon them; when, if some perished in the flames, and others escaped, a sufficient basis was afforded to the marvel-loving ancients for the erection of their fabulous structure.

The adoption of the phoenix by chemists as a shop-sign doubtless originated in its association with alchemy. Sir Thomas Browne says: “Some have written majestically (of the phoenix), as Paracelsus, in his book *De Azoth*, or *De Ligno et*

Linea Vitæ; and as several hermetical philosophers, involving therein the secret of their elixir, and enigmatically expressing the nature of their great work." The appropriateness of the phoenix as a fire-office emblem is still more evident.

The phoenix is sometimes metaphorically applied to persons, as, "He is a phoenix of his kind," "She is a phoenix among women;" the expression referring to the idea that only one phoenix ever existed at one time: wherefore, by a figure of speech, perfection is intended. Lastly, Metastasio, in a neat stanza, compares the fidelity of lovers to the phoenix, which, says he, "everybody talks of, but nobody has seen."

The expression of Job (xxix. 18): "Then I said, I shall die in my nest; I shall multiply my days as the sand," has been understood by some of the ancient fathers to be an allusion to the Phœnix, which is said to live several hundred years, and to expire on a funeral pile, prepared by itself, of various aromatics, such as frankincense, myrrh, &c., from which arises another phoenix. The early fathers, who knew nothing of Hebrew, thought that the expression, "the righteous shall flourish as a *palm-tree*," or in their language, *phœnix*, proved the existence of such a bird as the fabled phoenix; and so were led to believe the heathen superstition about her resurrection from her own ashes.—*Prince's Glimpse of the Wonders of Creation.*

THE UNICORN.

The most famous among the fabulous animals of the ancients was the Unicorn, whose real existence has been obstinately asserted even in the present day; or, at least, proofs of its existence have been eagerly sought for. Three several animals are frequently mentioned by the Ancients as having only one horn, placed on the middle of the forehead: 1. the *Oryx* of Africa, having cloven hoofs, the hair placed reversely to that of other animals, its height equal to that of the bull, or even of the rhinoceros, and said to resemble deer and goats in its form; 2. the *Indian Ass*, having solid hoofs; and 3. the *Monoceros*, properly so called, whose feet are sometimes compared to those of the lion, and sometimes to those of the elephant, and is therefore considered to have divided feet. The horse-unicorn and the bull-unicorn are doubtless both referable to the Indian ass, for even the latter is described as having solid hoofs. We may therefore be fully assured that these animals have never really existed, as no solitary horns have ever found their way into our collections excepting those of the rhinoceros and narwal. Again, in all cloven-footed animals the frontal bone is divided longitudinally into two, so that there could not possibly, as very justly remarked by Camper, be a horn placed upon the suture; a conclusion fatal to the identity of the oryx and the monoceros.

It has, however, been suggested that the straight-horned

Antelope Oryx of Gmelin may have furnished the idea of the unicorn being an oryx. Supposing an individual of this species to have been seen which had accidentally lost one of its horns, it may have been taken as a representative of the entire race, and erroneously adopted by Aristotle, to be copied by all his successors. All this is quite possible, and even natural, and gives not the smallest evidence for the existence of a single-horned species of antelope.

One of the most eminent zoologists of the day, however, refers the unicorn to the Indian rhinoceros; and his explanation is at once brief and satisfactory. He observes:

“The Indian rhinoceros affords a remarkable instance of the obstructions which the progress of knowledge may suffer, and the gross absurdities which not unfrequently result from the wrong application of a name. This animal, to whose horn the superstition of the Persians and Arabs has in all ages attributed peculiar virtues, became known to the Greeks through the description of Ctesias, a credulous physician of that nation, who appears to have resided at the court of Persia in the time of the younger Cyrus, about four hundred years before the birth of Christ. His account, though mixed up with a great deal of credulous absurdity, contains a very valuable and perfectly recognisable description of the rhinoceros, under the ridiculous name, however, of the *Indian Ass*; and as he attributed to it a whole hoof like the horse, and a single horn in the forehead, speculation required but one step further to produce the fabulous unicorn, such as it appears in the Royal Arms of England, and such as has retained its hold on popular credulity for the last two thousand years.”—*Mr. Ogilby; Dr. Royle's Natural History of the Himalayan Mountains.*

We suspect that heraldry, with its animal absurdities, has contributed more to the propagation of error respecting the natural world than any other species of misrepresentation.

It should be added, that the Rev. John Campbell, in his *Travels in South Africa* (vol. ii. p. 294), describes the head of another animal which, as far as the horn is concerned, seems to approach nearer than the common rhinoceros to the unicorn of the ancients. While in the Machow territory, the Hottentots brought to the traveller a head different from that of any rhinoceros that had previously been killed.

“The common African rhinoceros has a crooked horn resembling a cock's spur, which rises about nine or ten inches above the nose, and inclines backward; immediately behind which is a straight thick horn. But the head they brought had a straight horn projecting three feet from the forehead, about ten inches above the tip of the nose. The projection of this great horn very much resembles that of the fanciful unicorn in the British arms. It has a small thick horny substance eight inches long immediately behind it, and which can hardly be observed on the animal at the distance of a hundred yards; so that this species must look like a unicorn (in the sense ‘one-horned’) when running in the field.” The author adds: “The animal is considered by naturalists, since the arrival of the skull in London, to be the unicorn of the ancients, and the same that is described in Job xxxix.”

A fragment of the skull, with the horn, is deposited in the Museum of the London Missionary Society.

GRIFFINS.

Sir Thomas Browne refers to the supposed Griffin as "a mixed and dubious animal, in the forepart resembling an eagle, and behind the shape of a lion, with erected ears, four feet, and a long tail;" the belief in which "many affirm, and most deny not." Sir Thomas then shows this twofold nature of bird and beast to be monstrous, "if examined by the doctrine of animals," or, in other words, the state of zoological knowledge in his time. The grypes, or griffins, of Scripture he regards as a large species of eagle. The story of griffins defending mines of gold, near the Arimaspi, or one-eyed nation, he treats as a poetical fable—a mere hearsay of Herodotus. Yet, hieroglyphically, Sir Thomas allows the griffin to

"make out well the properties of a guardian: the ear implying attention; the wings, celerity of execution; the lion-like shape, courage and audacity; the hooked bill, reserve and tenacity. It is also an emblem of valour and magnanimity, as being compounded of the eagle and lion, the noblest animals in their kinds; and so it is applicable unto princes, presidents, generals, and all heroic commanders; and so is it also borne in the coat-arms of many noble families of Europe."

But Sir Thomas Browne claims for the griffin a far more ancient appropriation than as an heralldic distinction; since he considers it to be a hieroglyphic of the Egyptians, implying the great celerity, strength, and vigour of the sun. Thus, "in antient coins, we meet with gryphins, conjointly with Apollo's Tripodes and chariot-wheels; and the marble gryphins at St. Peter's, in Rome, as learned men conjecture, were first translated from the Temple of Apollo."*—*Vulgar Errors*, b. iii. c. 11.

We find the griffin to have been a favourite emblem with the Greeks; and a distinguished naturalist of our times has offered an ingenious idea of its origin from the Tapir, now known as the largest land animal in South America. M. Roulin observes, that the Greeks, who trafficked across the Black Sea, came in contact with the Scythians; and they, on their part, traded with the Argipeans, a Tartar people inhabiting the valleys at the foot of the Ural Mountains; the rich mines of which, doubtless, were known to the Greeks through the Scythians. In those early and superstitious ages, every treasure was supposed to possess its peculiar guardian: such warders were chosen for their strength and frightful appearance; and hence arose the compound images of the winged serpent, the dragon, and the griffin with the beak of an eagle and the claws of a lion. This last figure, our author conceives, was originally

* Sir Hamon L'Estrange, the commentator on Browne's *Vulgar Errors*, notes that he (Sir Hamon) saw in Sir Robert Cotton's library "a griffin's claw."

the guardian monster of the treasures of the Ural Mountains, the Cordilleras of the Argipeans; and its representation and its fabulous history were conveyed to the Greeks by the intervention of the Scythians, mingled with traditions of the gold mines in a manner conformable with the spirit of the times.

This animal, as it is evident by the illustration of M. Roulin's memoir, possesses in its general outline a close resemblance to the Tapir in a sitting attitude; and the naturalist thus accounts for its possession of the addenda of wings, crest, and tail. It is evident, he adds, that the original image of the Griffin, when introduced into Greece, was destitute of wings, as Herodotus, the oldest author who describes it, does not mention the wings; and his silence upon that point is important testimony. But the more ancient dragons of the caverns of Greece were nearly all furnished with those members; and it was no very great stretch of imagination to accord the wings of an eagle to an animal which seemed already to possess its head; for the proboscis of the tapir, when bent down in its usual position, bears no little similitude to the beak of that bird.

The sculptors, who considered the Griffin in a picturesque point of view, employing it in their arabesque ornaments, again contributed to alter its original form. To bestow additional gracefulness to its neck, they surmounted it with a mane, like that of their horses, making the hairs short, straight, and erect; and it is not impossible that they might have retained the genuine hogged mane of the tapir. Afterwards, to render still more fantastic a being which was already intermediate between a quadruped and a bird, they converted this crest into the likeness of the dorsal fin of a fish.

The division of the toes of the tapir caused with the Greeks the same error as with the Chinese in the fabrication of their Mé; and accordingly they substituted for them those of the lion. As to the tail, it was almost certain that they would attempt to supply that appendage; and whilst some merely gave to the animal one conformable with its feet, others, desiring to make the figure wholly imaginary, bestowed upon it a spiral scroll, and ornamented it with the leaves of the acanthus.—*Annales des Sciences Naturelles*.

It remains to be explained how the tapir was known to the Greeks; whereas at present only three species are known, two peculiar to South America, and the third, lately discovered by M. Roulin, in Malacca and Sumatra. The fossil remains of the *Palæotherium* of the old world show it to be a genus apparently intermediate between the rhinoceros, horse, and tapir, and in outline closely approximating to that of the American and Indian tapirs.

DRAGONS.

The old belief in the existence of Dragons was fostered by so many circumstances, that we are scarcely surprised to find traces of it retained even in the nomenclature of modern science. Meanwhile it is hard to tell the origin of this belief, unless the dragon of fable* be an exaggeration of the crocodile by old naturalists; for it resembles a huge lizard more than any other animal. And the name of Flying Dragon is to this day applied to a small Saurian found in the East Indies; which, being furnished with a kind of wing like that of the bats, but independent of the four feet, sustains itself like a parachute, when it leaps from branch to branch. Still it does not possess the faculty of beating the air, and so raising itself into flight like a bird; wherefore the epithet "flying" is an exaggeration.

The dragon, *Draco*, is one of the constellations referred by Higinus to the fable of the Hesperides of Greek mythology. These three nymphs dwelt in a beautiful garden in the western parts of the earth, in which grew the celebrated tree which bore golden apples. These apples were guarded by a fierce dragon named Ladon, who never slept; but Hercules killed this dragon, and carried off the precious fruit.

In the Apocalypse, the devil is called the dragon; on which account St. George, the patron saint of England, is usually painted on horseback, and tilting at a dragon under his feet, as emblematical of the saint's faith and fortitude.

If the old naturalists believed in the terrors of dragons, they were as credulous respecting an antidote to them. "The naturalists observe," says Howell, "that morning spittle kills dra-

* Of all Dragons, that of Wantley is the most celebrated. "This famous monster had, according to old story, forty-four teeth of iron, and some historians say he used to swallow up churches full of people, fat parson and all, and pick his teeth with the steeple; but this was probably only scandal. Little children, however, it is certain he used to munch up as we would an apple. He had eyes like live coals, with a long sting in his tail; and his sulphurous breath poisoned the country for ten miles round. The knight who went to fight this monster very wisely got himself a suit of armour stuck all over with iron spikes, so that he looked like a great hedgehog. and when the dragon tried to worry him, he was obliged to leave go again; then the knight gave him some proper kicks in the ribs with the spikes at the end of his iron boots, and once ran his sword right into him, and killed him; but the dragon, forgetting he was dead, still fought on, till a great part of his tail being lopped off, and his blood pouring out by buckets-full, he cried out 'Murder!' most lustily, and afterwards fainted away, and groaned, and kicked, and died; but, after all, the knight ran his sword into him several times, rightly conceiving that such a villain could never be too dead! If this story should not be true, it's founded on truth, and that's all the same thing. An overgrown rascally attorney, at Wantley, near Rotherham, in Yorkshire, cheated some children out of a large estate; but a gentleman in the neighbourhood, arming himself with the spikes of the law, recovered their property for them; and the attorney having lost it and his character for ever, sickened, grieved, and died. But what would such a dry every-day story of villany be worth without some poetical flourishes about it? or, as Flutter says, 'Really the common occurrences of this little dirty world are hardly worth relating without some embellishment.' "—*Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.

gons." (*Familiar Letters*.) They also gave the name of "Dragon's Blood" to a resinous exudation from a palm-tree in the East and West Indies; the colour of the resin being that of blood. Again, the term "Dragon-fly" has been applied to a harmless insect, from an erroneous notion of its possessing a sharp sting.

Recently, however, an ingenious attempt has been made to identify the dragon of fable with the crocodile.

M. de Freminville cites many known facts of natural history, to prove that there is no reason to believe that crocodiles never inhabited western Europe merely because we do not now find them there. And, above all, he adduces the fact that, in the sand at the mouth of the Seine, at Harfleur, and Quillebœuf, entire skeletons of crocodiles have been found in a state only half fossilised. From all which he concludes, that the continual battles of the heroes of the middle ages with dragons were in truth real encounters with crocodiles.—*Trollope's Tour in Brittany*, vol. ii.

THE MERMAID.

The absurd notion, "that there are Mermen and Mermaids, half man or woman and the remainder fish," was of long standing, but is now exploded.

"Few eyes," says Sir Thomas Browne, "have escaped the *picture* of mermaids (for he does not admit their existence), that is, according to Horace, this monster with woman's head above and fishy extremity below; and these are conceived to answer the shape of the ancient Syrens that attempted upon Ulysses. Which, notwithstanding, were of another description, containing no fishy composure, but made up of man and bird; the humane mediety variously placed, not only above but below."

Sir Thomas is, on the contrary, inclined to refer the mermaid to Dagon, the tutelary deity of the Philistines, which, according to the common opinion, had a human female bust and a fish-like termination; though the details of this fish-idolatry are conjectural.

The progress of zoological science has long since destroyed the belief in the existence of the mermaid. If its upper structure be human, with lungs resembling our own, how could such a creature live and breathe at the bottom of the sea, where it is stated to be? for our own most expert divers are unable to stay under water more than half an hour. Suppose it to be of the cetaceous class, it could only remain under the water two or three minutes together without rising to the surface to take breath; and if this were the case with the mermaid, would it not be oftener seen?

The olden accounts of the taking of mermaids are too absurd for quotation; but it is truly surprising that the exhibi-

tion of a pretended mermaid in London, so lately as in 1822, should have caught thousands of dupes; 300 or 400 of whom paid daily one shilling each for the indulgence of their credulity! The imposture was, however, too gross to last long; and it was ascertained to be the dried skin of the head and shoulders of a monkey, attached very neatly to the dried skin of a fish of the salmon kind, with the head cut off; the compound figure being stuffed and highly varnished, the better to deceive the eye. This grotesque object was taken by a Dutch vessel from on board a native Malacca boat; and, from the reverence shown to it by the sailors, it is supposed to have represented the incarnation of one of the idol-gods of the Molucca Islands. The Chinese and Japanese are very skilful in dressing up such matters; and this was doubtless a *manufacture* of the Indian Seas.* It is remarkable, that another pretended mermaid, shown in Holland, is stated to have been brought from Japan; this specimen has but one fin at the tail, so that if the object was ever in the water, its head must have been at all times lower than any other part. Both specimens are, however, so unsightly as to reduce Dryden's "fine woman ending in a fish's tail" to a witty fancy.

The existence of mermaids has, however, been attested by so many witnesses, as to induce us to seek for the means by which they have doubtless been imposed on. Most of these observers have known but little of natural history, and many of them have been superstitious seamen, who have in all probability mistaken for a mermaid a dugong, which, of all the *cetaceæ*, approaches the nearest in form to man; and which, when its head and breast are raised above the water, and its pectoral fins, resembling hands, are visible, might easily be taken by the above observers for a semi-human being.†

We have omitted to state, that the mermaid is said to have been seen using a comb and toilet-glass; which accessories to the fable, together with the origin of the creature, Sir George Head thus ingeniously attempts to explain in his popular *Home Tour*:—

* It is but justice to state, that Mr. Jordan, then Editor of the *Literary Gazette*, was one of the first, if not the first journalist, to expose the fabrication of the mermaid of 1822; which other less sagacious observers were induced to regard as a natural wonder!

† The latest evidence is the following declaration of two fishermen on the Argyleshire coast, recorded in the *Shipping Gazette*: "We, the undersigned, do declare, that on Thursday last, the 4th June 1857, when on our way to the fishing station, Lochindaale, in a boat, and when about four miles S.W. from the village of Port Charlotte, being then about 6 p.m., we distinctly saw an object about six yards distant from us in the shape of a woman, with full breast, dark complexion, comely face, and fine hair hanging in ringlets over the neck and shoulders. It was above the surface of the water to about the middle, gazing at us and shaking its head. The weather being fine, we had a full view of it, and that for three or four minutes.—John Williamson, John Cameron.—Isle, June 9, 1857."

The resemblance of the seal, or sea-calf, to the calf consists only in the voice, and the voice of the calf is certainly not dissimilar to that of a man; therefore the connection of the seal to humanity is, perhaps, farther preserved by the Greek word signifying a man being *φωρ*, and a seal *φωκη*. But the claws of the seal, as well as the hand, are like a lady's back hair-comb; wherefore altogether, supposing the resplendence of sea-water streaming down its polished neck on a sun-shiny day the substitute for a looking-glass, we arrive at once at the fabulous history of the marine maiden, or mermaid, and the appendages of her toilet.

After so many exposures of the absurd belief in mermaids, we certainly did not expect to find any person in Europe weak enough to report the existence of one of these creatures to an eminent scientific body. Yet such has been the case: for, on June 22, 1840, the First Secretary of the Ottoman Embassy at Paris addressed a note to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, stating seriously that his father, who is in the Admiralty department of Constantinople, had recently seen a mermaid while crossing the Bosphorus; which communication caused a great deal of hilarity!

The fairy-like Mermaid has been traced to the sirens of the heroic ages, who at times sought the company of mortals. Waldron relates many such traditions as prevailing in the Isle of Man, and Leyden has collected them in the preface to his ballad of *The Mermaid*. Sometimes the mermaid laid aside her scaly train, and appeared as a lovely woman with sea-green hair; and Crofton Croker relates, in his *Fairy Legends*, a marriage between an Irish fisherman and a "merrow," as the mermaid is called in Ireland. Webster, in his *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, has collected many curious accounts of mermaids and mermen. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, relates many stories of mermaids, and in the reign of Tiberius, of "a certain sea-goblin, called Triton, sounding a shell like a trumpet or cornet," and that his shape was commonly attributed to Tritons. He also tells of sea-elephants, of monsters with teeth nine inches in breadth, and assures us that the very beast before which Andromeda was exposed had been caught, and its bones publicly exhibited at Rome by M. Scaurus.—*Abridged from the Rev. W. Christmas's Cradle of the Twin Giants*, vol. ii. pp. 206-211.

THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT.

"That much fable and exaggeration," says Dr. Robert Hamilton, in the *Naturalist's Library*, "have been mixed up with the history of the Great Sea-Serpent, cannot be doubted: still the inquiry recurs, what portion of truth is involved amidst this error?"

The term *cete* was by the ancients used in a wider sense than at present, being made to include, along with the whales, those animals which they regarded as *sea-monsters*. We have but very obscure intimation of what these monsters really were: they were not true or common fish, but were reputed to be prodigious animals, whose form and nature were imperfectly understood, and which were particularly the objects of vulgar

superstitious dread. Even at the present day it is asserted that such monsters exist, whose characters all the assiduity of naturalists has not hitherto satisfactorily ascertained.

There are several records of the sea-serpent having been seen. Dr. Hibbert mentions that the great sea-serpent has occasionally been recognised in the Shetland Seas, and specifies one seen off Stromness. Remains of marine animals, supposed to have been from fifty to seventy feet in length, are preserved in Scotland; and in the *Transactions of the Wernerian Society*, an animal is described with a head as large as a little boat and an eye as large as a plate; but this animal does not appear to have been strictly serpentiform, and Professor Owen describes two of its vertebræ to be those of a great shark. Long before the date of these instances, the sea-serpent was recognised in the fauna of Scandinavia; and Egede, in his voyage to Greenland, states that he saw off that coast, in 1734, a monster with a tail a whole ship's length from its body. Pontoppidan, however, claimed the sea-serpent for the coast of Norway; where, upon the authority of fishermen and sailors, he describes it as about six hundred feet long!

But, as to personal acquaintance with the monster, Pontoppidan was much in the same condition with Peter Dass, whose verses he quotes:

“ The great sea-snake's the subject of my song;
For though my eyes have never yet beheld him,
Nor ever shall desire the hideous sight,
Yet many accounts of men of truth unstained,
Whose ev'ry word I firmly do believe,
Show it to be a very frightful monster.”

Nat. Hist. of Norway, vol. ii.

In August 1848, Capt. M'Quhæ, in the *Dædalus* frigate, his officers and crew, saw between the Cape of Good Hope and St. Helena, a creature closely resembling Pontoppidan's sea-serpent, of a dark-brown colour and white throat, and a sort of mane, resembling a bunch of sea-weed, visible about four feet out of the water. There were about 60 feet of its body in a straight line on the surface; and it was calculated there were under water about 30 or 40 feet more, by which it propelled itself at the rate of 15 miles an hour. The motion was not perceptible by undulations of the body, the very character which would distinguish a serpent or serpentiform swimmer from any other marine species; while it had a capacious vaulted cranium, and other characters of the head of a warm-blooded mammal, but none of those of a cold-blooded reptile or fish. Professor Owen therefore concluded the animal to be not a cetaceous mammal, but rather a gigantic seal; but, from the account of the officer on watch in the *Dædalus*, the creature seen by him and Capt. M'Quhæ was a large cachelot, or black fish.

Professor Owen adds: "If a gigantic sea-serpent actually exists, a number of individuals must have lived and died, and have left their remains; but none such are to be found, for there is no vertebra of a serpent larger than the ordinary pythons and boas in any museum in Europe. Nor are such remains to be traced in any natural-history collection in the United States, although the frequent tales of the sea-serpent appearing near the shores and harbours has led to its being specified as 'the American sea-serpent,' at least fifty feet long!"

In conclusion, Professor Owen regards "the negative evidence, from the utter absence of any of the recent remains of great sea-serpents, krakens, or *Enaliosauria*, as stronger against their actual existence than the positive statements which have hitherto weighed with the public mind in favour of their existence. A larger body of evidence from eye-witnesses might be got together in proof of ghosts than of the sea-serpent."

Mr. Jesse, who has probably had "as much to do with snakes as any body," states that they swim with the head and neck considerably elevated; they move as on land, with lateral or horizontal folds; whereas the sea-serpent is described and figured with the head erect in the same way, but as if he moved with vertical instead of horizontal folds; which must certainly be a mistake, because it is impossible that locomotion could be so performed, unless by repeatedly diving down the head, which the sea-serpent has never been seen to do.—*Country Life*, p. 291.

"THE SERPENT IN THE SEA"

Was a superstition known to the Chinese, and was doubtless at one time a very general superstition among the heathens; for we find it mentioned by Isaiah, c. xxvii. 1: "In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay *the dragon that is in the sea.*"

BOTANICAL PERVERSIONS.

There is a curious perversion of name in the tuberose, which has nothing to do with 'tubes' or 'roses,' but is the corruption of its specific name, *Polianthes tuberosa*, simply signifying 'tuberous:' so Jerusalem artichoke has nothing to do with the hill of Sion, but is vulgarised from the Italian *Girosole*, sunflower, of which it is a species; so mayduke cherry, from Medoc; and 'grass,' from asparagus. Gilliflower is probably July-flower; but it would take an essay to discuss which is the true gilliflower of our great-great-grandmothers.

“ JEWS’ EARS.”

Many a reader has smiled at the apparent absurdity of being told, in Scepton’s *One Thousand Notable Things*, to soak a Jew’s Ear in vinegar ; but the mistake is thus corrected by Sir Thomas Browne in his *Vulgar Errors* :

In Jews’ Ears something is conceived extraordinary from the name, which is in propriety but *fungus sambucinus*, or an excrescence about the roots of elder, and concerneth not the nation of the Jews, but Judas Iscariot, upon a conceit that he hanged on this tree ; and is become a famous medicine in quinsies, sore throats, and strangulations, ever since.

THE SEA-PEA.

The Sea-Pea (*Pisum Maritimum*) is interesting from the legend, still rife in Suffolk, that it sprang up spontaneously on the coast in 1555, in a time of great scarcity. The miraculous arrival of these peas is mentioned by Stow and Camden, who supposed them to have sprung from the cargo of some vessel wrecked on the coast, and washed ashore ; but the sea-pea is a distinct species, probably indigenous, and only used in dearth.

VIRTUES OF BETONY AND BRYONY.

Betony is described by Cowley, in his *Plantarium*, as found

“ Where’er red streams through milky meadows glide ;”

and, in allusion to its influence on the brain as a purgative, the poet exclaims :

“ The soul commits her palace to my care.”

The idea of purging the brain is of extreme antiquity. Carneades prepared himself for his contest with his old master, Zeno the Stoic, by purging his head with white hellebore, “lest the corrupt humours of his stomach might disorder his brain.” There is an Italian proverb, “He has as many virtues as betony,” *i. e.* innumerable virtues.

Anodyne necklaces (beads formed of the roots of white bryony) are hung around the necks of children to assist their teething,—an instance of the still surviving confidence in the virtue of amulets. Such also is the belief that a Child’s Caul will save the wearer from shipwreck ;* and coral is worn by infants as a teething aid.

THE TARTARIAN LAMB.

The Scythian Lamb, sometimes called the Tartarian Lamb, was said to be an animal ; and although rooted to the ground, to have such a deadly effect upon vegetation in its neighbourhood, as to prevent grass of any kind from growing there. So anomalous a creature attracted the notice of the Royal Society ;

* This fancied preservative, “the Child’s Caul,” is fully described in *Things not generally Known*, pp. 186, 187. See also “Coral and Bella,” p. 185.

but it was subsequently discovered to be a species of moss, curiously twisted, so as to have some resemblance in form to a lamb. A specimen of the imposition was formerly preserved in the British Museum.

The Tartarian Lamb (*Polypodium Barometz*) is thus characterised by Dr. Darwin :

“Cradled in snow and fann’d by arctic air,
Shines, gentle Barometz ! thy golden hair ;
Rooted in earth each cloven hoof descends,
And round and round her flexile neck she bends ;
Crops the gray coral moss and hoary thyme,
Or laps with rosy tongue the melting rime ;
Eyes with mute tenderness her distant dam,
Or seems to bleat, a *Vegetable Lamb* !”

Botanic Garden, ii. 283.

THE SUN-FLOWER

Is not named, as some have supposed, from turning to the sun, but from the resemblance of the full-blown flower to the sun itself. Gérarde remarks, that he has seen four of these flowers upon the same stem, facing the four cardinal points.

“The flower of the sunne (he says) is called in Latin *Flos solis*, taking that name from those that have reported it to turne with the sunne, the which I could never observe, although I have endeavoured to find out the truth of it ; but I rather thinke it was so called bicause it doth resemble the radiant beames of the sunne, whereupon some have called it *Corona solis*, and *Sol Indianus*, the Indian sunflower ; others have called it *Chrysanthemum Peruvianum*, or the golden flower of Peru. In English, the flower of the sunne, or the sunneflower.”—*Herbal*, 1597.

THE VINEYARD.

A vineyard is by no means so pleasing an object as our ideas of beauty and plenty would lead us to imagine. The hop-plantations of our own country are, indeed, far more picturesque. In France, the vines are trained upon poles seldom more than three or four feet high, and are little more pleasing in appearance than raspberry-stocks in England. In Greece and Italy their luxuriance is seen to better advantage, but it falls short of the vineyard of poetry and romance.

In our stock of Vulgar Errors is a notion that the old statutes have prohibited the planting of vineyards.

THE VINE NOURISHED BY BLOOD.

Not many years since, there was an ill-founded notion that Blood poured upon the roots of the Vine during spring would tend to increase its fruitfulness. May not this notion have originated from a passage of Plutarch, wherein he states that the Egyptians believed the vine to grow from the ground impregnated with the blood of giants that had been killed in the wars with their gods ? Blood-manure is, however, still much used in England.

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Superstition and Credulity.

SUPERSTITION NATURAL TO MAN.

MUCH of the belief in superstitions may be traced to the proneness of men to “turn the most indifferent circumstances into misfortunes,” thus causing themselves to suffer as much from trifling accidents as from real evils; “as if the natural calamities of life were not sufficient.” “I have known,” says the Essayist, “the shooting of a star spoil a night’s rest; and have seen a man in love grow pale, and lose his appetite, upon the plucking of a merrythought. The screech-owl at night has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket hath struck more terror than the roaring of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens and prognostics.”

MIRACULOUS SOLUTIONS.

Sir Thomas Browne thus corrects the common error of referring points of obscurity to supernatural causes:

It is a very injurious method unto philosophy, and a perpetual promotion of ignorance, in points of obscurity, nor open unto easy consideration, to fall upon a present refuge unto miracles, or recur unto immediate contrivance from the unsearchable hands of God. Thus, in the conceit of the evil odour of Jews, Christians, without a further research into the verity of the thing, or inquiry into the cause, draw up a judgment upon them from the passion of their Saviour. Thus, in the wondrous effects of the clime of Ireland, and the freedom from all venomous creatures, the credulity of common conceit imputes this immunity unto the benediction of St. Patrick, as Beda and Gyraldus have recorded. Thus the ass, having a peculiar mark of a cross made by a black list down his back, and another athwart or at right angles down his shoulders, common opinion ascribes this figure unto a peculiar signation, since that beast had the honour to bear our Saviour on his back. Certainly this is a course more desperate than antipathies, sympathies, or occult qualities; wherein, by a final and satisfactive discernment of faith, we lay the last and particular effects upon the first and general cause of all things; whereas in the other we do but palliate our determinations, until our advanced endeavours do totally reject, or partially salve their evasions.—*Vulgar Errors*, b. vi. c. 11.

POLITICAL PROPHECIES.

The belief that some human beings could attain the power

of inflicting ills on their fellow-creatures, and of controlling the operations of nature, is one of the highest antiquity. "Time was, when the astrologer acted no inconsiderable part in the world of politics; but, yielding to the stern decree of fate, his occupation now is gone. Jacob's staff is broken. The brazen astrolabe is green and cankered. Dust and cobwebs cover the tomes of Ptolemy and Haly; and the garrets of Spitalfields and the Seven Dials are untenanted by the Seers, who whilom dealt out their awful prognostications of changes in church and state. So far we seem to have gained a victory over the superstitions of the middle ages; *but our superiority in some respects exists rather in apprehension than in reality*, and we have only changed the appearance of the disease. Those who would have been misled in ancient times, are equally deceivable in modern days. Human folly is as immortal as the race; and though we have dragged the astrologer out of his arm-chair, there are others who have succeeded to his contemned honours, for he was guided in his lucubrations by an imperishable instinct." The sage who would heretofore have foretold plague and pestilence, war and bloodshed, from the Zodiac, now acquires the same popularity by deducing the calamities of this nether world from the assemblage of monarchs at a congress; and, instead of watching the orbit of the planet, he fulfils his duty by reporting the course of the minor star that glitters on the breast of the plenipotentiary.

Howell, in one of his rambling *Letters*, says: "I am none of those that afford much faith to rambling prophecies; which, as was said elsewhere, are like so many odd grains sown in the vast field of time, whereof not one in a thousand comes to grow up again and appear above ground."

LUCK OF DAYS.

Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit on a Friday, and died on a Friday. See Soames's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 255.

Harold's "Lucky Day" was Saturday; on which he therefore fixed to measure his strength with Duke William. Saturday was his birthday, and his mother had frequently assured him that projects undertaken on that day would bring him good fortune.

The Emperor Frederic II. had a firm faith in the prediction of astrologers: he never undertook a march until the fortunate moment for departure had been fixed by those skilled in divination; and when, in 1239, he was about to advance against Treviso, his march was suddenly arrested by an eclipse of the sun.

CUTTING TIMBER BY THE MOON.

Columella, Cato, Vitruvius, and Pliny, all had their no-

tions of the advantages of cutting timber at certain ages of the moon ; a piece of mummery which is still preserved in the royal ordonnances of France to the conservators of the forests, who are directed to fell oaks only “in the wane of the moon” and “when the wind is at north.”

OLD ALMANACS.

The superstitious practice formerly observed in our Almanacs, but now almost exploded, of placing each limb of the body under a particular sign of the Zodiac, is of high antiquity, being attributed to Nechepsos, or Nerepsos, an Egyptian, and author of several treatises on astronomy, astrology, and medicine, who lived in the age of Sesostris. Its object, we are told, was to enable the medical practitioners (who are supposed to have been of the priestly order) to apply suitable remedies to diseases affecting any particular member. From Egypt this superstition passed to the Greeks and Romans; from them to the Saracens; and being by the latter transmitted to the school of Salerno, it was acted upon in the medical practice of every European country. Such absurdities assuredly afford no very favourable indication of the vaunted science of that extraordinary people among whom they took their rise; but it would be rash to conclude, that the attestations of the highest ancient authorities to the progress of the Egyptians in the sciences at a remote period are groundless, because their knowledge was mixed up with superstitions inconsistent with truth and sound philosophy.—*Proc. Royal Soc. Lit.*, 1836.

The almanac superstitions of the last century were certainly eclipsed by those of the two preceding centuries. In Shakspeare's day, for example, Leonard Digges, the Francis Moore of that period, not only prognosticated for the day, week, or year, but “for all time,” as the title-page of his almanac shows:

“A Prognostication *everlasting* of right good effect, fruitfully augmented by the auctour, contayning plain, briefe, pleasaunte, chosen rules to iudge of the Weather by the Sunne, Moone, Starres, Comets, Rainebow, Thunder, Cloudes, with other extraordinarye tokens, not omitting the Aspects of the Planets; with a briefe iudgement *for euer* of Plenty, Lucke, Sicknesse, Dearth, Warres, &c., opening also many natural causes worthy to be knowen.” 1575.

It is true that we still have our prophetic almanacs, but they are now looked on with the eye of curiosity rather than belief. It is singular how long the human mind will cling to folly to which it is accustomed after the understanding is satisfied of its want of truth. As far back as 1607, we find the following prohibition of prophetic almanacs; yet even in the present day some wretched trash is published under the same title:

"All conjurors and framers of prophecies and almanacs exceeding the limits of *allowable astrology*, shall be punished severely in their persons. And we forbid all printers and booksellers, under the same penalties, to print, or expose for sale, any almanacs or prophecies which shall not first have been seen and revised by the archbishop, the bishop (or those who shall be expressly appointed for that purpose), and approved of by their certificates signed by their own hand, and, in addition, shall have permission from us or from our ordinary judges."

Such follies as the above have been smartly satirised in "*Punch's Almanac*;" a humorous attempt to laugh mankind out of their weaknesses by the force of pleasant ridicule.

MOORE'S ALMANAC.

The largest impressions of any single book, perhaps, ever sold have been those of Moore's *Almanac*; a proof of the prevalence of superstitious error. For many years during the late wars, when political excitement was excessive, the Stationers' Company sold from 420,000 to 480,000 of Moore's *Astrological Propheying Almanac*. About seventy years since, the Company resolved no longer to administer to this gross credulity, and for two or three years omitted the predictions, when the sale fell off one half; while a prognosticator, one Wright, of Eaton, near Woolstrobe, published another almanac, and sold 50,000 or 60,000. To save their property, the Company engaged one Andrews, of Royston, also a native of Woolstrobe, to predict for them, and their sale rose as before.

OMENS AND DEATH-TOKENS.

Omens constitute the poetry of history. They cause the series of events, which they are supposed to declare, to flow into special unity; and the political catastrophe seems to be produced, not by prudence or by folly, but by the superintending destiny. The numerous tokens of the death of Henry IV. are finely tragical. Mary of Medicis, in her dream, saw the brilliant gems of her crown change into pearls, the symbol of tears and mourning. An owl hooted until sunrise at the window of the chamber to which the king and queen retired at St. Denis, on the night preceding her coronation. During the ceremony, it was observed with dread that the dark portals leading to the royal sepulchres beneath the choir were gaping and expanded. The flame of the consecrated taper held by the queen was suddenly extinguished, and twice her crown nearly fell to the ground. The prognostications of the misfortunes of the Stuarts have equally a character of solemn grandeur; and we are reminded of the portents of Rome, when we read how the sudden tempest rent the royal standard on the Tower of London. Charles, yielding to his destiny, was obstinate in the

signs of evil death. He refused to be clad in the garments of Edward the Confessor, in which all his predecessors had been arrayed; and he would be attired in white satin. Strongly did the Earl of Pembroke attempt to dissuade him, for the prophecy of the misfortunes of *the white king* had long been current; but his entreaties were in vain, and Charles was crowned, invested with the raiment which indicated his misfortunes.—*Sir Walter Scott—Quarterly Review*, No. 51.

TWELFTH-NIGHT OMEN.

At Bayeux, in Normandy, if either of the family be absent when the cake is cut on Twelfth-night, his or her share is carefully put by. If the absentee remains well, it is believed that the cake continues fresh; if ill, it begins to be moist; if he or she dies, the cake spoils.

SAILORS' OMENS.

Sailors, usually the boldest men alive, are yet frequently the very abject slaves of superstitious fear. "Innumerable," says Scott on Witchcraft, "are the reports of accidents unto such as frequent the seas, as fishermen and sailors, who discourse of noises, flashes, shadows, echoes, and other visible appearances, nightly seen and heard upon the surface of the water."

Dr. Pegge says: "Our sailors, I am told, at this very day, I mean the vulgar sort of them, have a strange opinion of the devil's power and agency in stirring-up winds; and that is the reason they so seldom whistle on ship-board, esteeming that to be a mocking and consequently an enraging of the devil. And it appears now that even Zoroaster himself imagined there was an evil spirit called *Vato*, that could excite violent storms of wind."

At the present day common sailors account it very unlucky to lose a bucket or a mop. To throw a cat overboard, or drown one at sea, is the same. Children are deemed lucky to a ship. Whistling at sea is supposed to cause increase of wind, and is therefore much disliked by seamen; though sometimes they themselves practise it when there is a dead calm.

SPECTRE SHIPS.

When a ship is wrecked upon the shores of Wales, it is affirmed by the inhabitants that its *apparition*, previously visiting the spot, has most commonly been seen. Thousands of these spectre-ships hover about the coast in winter, their impassive sails shivering and straining in the tempest, and their decks manned with the spirits of those whom destiny is hurrying through the ocean to destruction. It would be vain to tell these superstitious people that beams, planks, masts, iron bolts,

and cordage, can have no soul; they *believe*, but cannot analyse their notions, and therefore suppose that the word *ship* denotes a being which, while it continues whole, has some kind of spirit attached to it; and this, they imagine, goes before it to the place of shipwreck. In the same belief is also involved another impossibility (unless it be a relic of that ancient Grecian opinion, which taught that man was a threefold being—a spirit, the spirit's aerial vehicle, and the body); for if the men's spirits were on board the spectre-ship, their bodies would be tenantless in the real wooden tenement. An opinion nearly akin to this was entertained by the learned Earl of Roscommon, and countenanced by Dr. Johnson.—*J. A. St. John.*

ARGUMENTS AGAINST GHOST STORIES.

It is a loss of time for a matter-of-fact man to attempt to reason an imaginative person out of belief in a Ghost Story; for the premises from which the latter reasons, perhaps correctly, will not be granted by the unimaginative person, and cannot be disproved by any argument that he may use. For example: a person declares that he has seen a ghost, and infers the probability of various ghost stories from the fact. Your never having seen a ghost in no way disproves his fact; nor do all the arguments which you can bring against the probability of such a fact disprove it to him who knows it, so far as his impressions can be trusted, to be a fact. It is, therefore, not by reasoning from *your* premises that you will effect any thing in disproving *his*. The only thing to be done is, to put him in a way of being convinced that similar impressions have been fallacious; beginning with the most palpably absurd, and ascending by degrees till you arrive at the level of his own folly.—*Quarterly Review*, No. 51.

Swift has attempted to demolish belief in Apparitions, by observing that “one argument to prove that the common relations of ghosts and spectres are generally false may be drawn from the opinion held that *spirits are never seen by more than one person at a time*; that is to say, it seldom happens to above one person in a company to be possessed with any high degree of spleen or melancholy.”

The belief in Apparitions, which was all but universal a century ago, is still, and ever will be, held by a large number of mankind! Call it a prejudice if you will: “What is an universal prejudice,” says Reginald Heber, “but the voice of human nature?” Shakspeare seems to express his own opinion when he writes: “They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of

terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we would submit ourselves to an unknown fear."

M. Morier, in his work entitled *Photo the Suliote*, states :

The belief in ghosts ("umgehende verstorbene," the *vagabondising defunct*) is universally spread. The Toshki Albanian calls them, as the modern Greek also does, βουρβολακον (μορμολυκειον in old Greek, the *loup-garou* of the French nursery-tales). In some places it is believed that any corpse upon which a cat or any other beast has made a spring becomes a *vourvolàk*. Such a corpse is not subject to corruption. Over its grave there is seen all night long a glimmering light; after forty days it rises and wanders about, perpetrating all manner of mischief in its own and its kinsmen's habitations, and even sleeping with the surviving wife. Formerly such corpses were dug up again and burnt; and this sometimes happens even now. This operation is performed in the night, between Friday and Saturday, at which time the *vourvolàk* remains quiet in its grave. At Perlepé there are several families called vampires. They are looked upon as the progeny of *vourvolàks*, and are shunned by all the world. They possess the art of giving a *quietus* to roving *vourvolàks*; an art, however, which they keep very secret.

"BLUE DEVILS."

In a paper in the *Journal of Psychological Medicine* on Baron Feuchtersleben's Principles of Medical Psychology, showing how the mind is influenced by a mechanical calling, there is this curious sentence: "Roach and Esquirol affirm, from observation, that indigo-dyers become melancholy; and those who dye scarlet, choleric. Their observation regarding indigo-dyers affords a strong confirmation of the statement of that arch-quack Paracelsus, who declared blue to be injurious." This would seem to suggest that our phrase, "the blue devils," may derive its origin from a scientific fact.—*Chambers's Journal*.

BELIEVING IN DREAMS.

Upon this vexed question Macnish, in his able work, the *Philosophy of Sleep*, says :

Dreams have been looked upon by some as the occasional means of giving us an insight into futurity. This opinion is so singularly unphilosophical, that it would not be noticed, were it not advocated even by persons of good sense and education. In ancient times, it was so common as to obtain universal belief; and the greatest men placed as implicit faith in it as in any fact of which their own senses afforded them cognisance. That it is wholly erroneous, however, cannot be doubted; and any person who examines the nature of the human mind, and the manner in which it operates in dreams, must be convinced, that under no circumstances, except those of a miracle, in which the ordinary laws of nature are triumphed over, can such an event ever take place. The Sacred Writings testify that miracles were common in former times; but it is believed that no man of sane mind will contend that they ever occur in the present state of the world. In judging of things as now constituted, we must discard supernatural influence altogether, and estimate events according to the general laws which the Great Ruler of

Nature has appointed for the guidance of the universe. If, in the present day, it were possible to conceive a suspension of these laws, it must, as in former ages, be in reference to some great event, and to serve some mighty purpose connected with the general interests of the human race; but if faith is to be placed in modern miracles, we must suppose that God suspended the above laws for the most trivial and useless of purposes—as, for instance, to intimate to a man that his grandmother will die on a particular day, that a favourite mare has broken her neck, that he has received a present of a brace of game, or that a certain friend will step in and take pot-luck with him on the morrow.

“THE SEVENTH SON.”

“It is believed,” says Mr. Roberts, in his *Social History of the Southern Coast*, “that a Seventh Son can cure diseases; but that a seventh son of a seventh son, and no female child born between, can cure the king’s evil. Such a favoured individual is really looked on with veneration.” In 1828, in Axminster parish, the mother of a *seventh son* said, in reply to Mr. Roberts’s question as to what a *seventh son* was, that “she did think, to cure all diseases, he should be the seventh son of a seventh son; but *many folk do come to touch my son.*”

LOT’S WIFE.

In the account of the destruction of the five cities of the Plain, the text (*Genesis* xix. 26), “She became a pillar of salt,” does not afford any ground for the common impression that Lot’s wife became a statue of rock salt. The word rendered “a pillar,” denotes generally any fixed object, and that rendered “salt” denotes also bitumen. So the text would seem to denote, that the woman was overwhelmed by the encroaching matter, which formed a mound over her and fixed her where she stood. The “pillar of salt” is one of the wonders which travellers have been in the habit of looking for in this district; and masses of salt have accordingly been shown them, but in such different situations as to manifest that the natives were imposing upon them for the sake of their money.—*Notes to the Pictorial Bible*, p. 50.

Professor Daubeny, in his work on Volcanoes, explains the above phenomenon with more scientific precision than the writer of the preceding note. The Professor supposes that volcanic agency was the physical instrument employed by the Almighty to destroy the five cities of the Plain; that the Salt or Dead Sea arose either from the subsidence of the Plain, or from the damming of the Jordan by a current of lava; that the showers of fire and brimstone were occasioned by the fall of volcanic ejections; and (agreeing in this with Henderson, the well-known missionary traveller in Iceland) that Lot’s wife, lingering be-

hind her friends, may have been first suffocated, and then incrusted with saline and other volcanic materials.

LOOKING BACK.

The superstition of the Ill Luck of Looking Back, or returning, is thousands of years old: it doubtless originated in Lot "having looked back from behind him," when he was led with his family and cattle by an angel outside the doomed city of the Plain. (*Genesis* xix. 26.) "Whether walking or riding, the wife was behind her husband, according to a usage still prevalent in the East, where no woman goes before or beside her husband." Mr. Roberts, in his curious *Oriental Illustrations*, remarks, that it is considered exceedingly unfortunate in Hindoostan for men or women to look back when they leave their house. Accordingly, if a man goes out, and leaves something behind him which his wife knows he will want, she does not call him to turn or look back, but takes or sends it after him; and if some great emergency obliges him to look back, he will not then proceed on the business he was about to transact. If we mistake not, some similar feeling is entertained in some parts of England, though not carried so far into operation.—*Notes to the Pictorial Bible*, p. 50.

THE GOODWIN SANDS.

The southern boundary of the Downs, opposite Deal, and known as the Goodwin Sands, have in their history two or three notable Errors. There was a popular opinion for ages that these Sands possessed "a voracious and ingurgitating property; so that should a ship of the largest size strike on them, in a few days it would be wholly swallowed up by these quicksands, so that no part of it would be left to be seen." Shakspeare probably alludes to this belief when, in the *Merchant of Venice*, act iii. scene 1, Salarino refers to "a ship of rich lading wrecked on the narrow seas,—the Goodwins, I think they call the place; a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried." More accurate observers have, however, found the sand to be of the same quality as that of the opposite shore.

Tradition, grounded upon some monkish annals, represents these Sands as having been formerly an island, belonging to the great Goodwin, Earl of Kent; and that "it sonke sodainly into the sea," as a mark of vengeance of Heaven against the sins of that nobleman, A.D. 1097. Others, with greater probability, consider it to have been a shallow, previously covered with a depth of water sufficient to admit the passage of vessels over it, but made bare about the above-mentioned period by the accumulation of sand.

A more absurd error remains to be explained, viz. the ancient saying that "*Tenterden Steeple* was the cause of *Goodwin Sands*;" or, in other words, that these Sands first appeared in the year that Tenterden church was erected. It would rather seem, from the *Dialogues* of Sir Thomas More, that the adage was first applied to the decay of Sandwich Haven, the funds for the preservation of which are represented to have been expended by the monks in erecting the steeple of Tenterden church: and if we credit Fuller, who says "it was erected by the Bishop of Rochester, with a collection of money that had been made to fence against the sea in East Kent."

BELIEF IN TALISMANS.

The word *Talisman* is of Arabic origin, and means literally *figure*. It is, in fact, the image, or figure, of some object deemed sacred, or otherwise appropriate, carved on wood, stone, leather, metal, or other substance; and was supposed to possess the power of protecting the owner or wearer from danger, disease, or evil influence. The Egyptians used images of their gods and sacred animals, as the ibis, the scarabæus, &c.; the Greeks, little tablets inscribed with the Ephesian words; the Romans had various idols and eccentric figures, which they usually wore suspended round the neck by chains; and the Turks and Arabians to the present day make use of sentences from the Koran. From the time of the middle ages downwards, the Roman Catholics have had their relics, consecrated candles, &c.

The virtues attributed to the scarabæus (says Moufet) are so numerous, that they would scarcely be believed, if we could not put faith in what Pliny says, inasmuch as a scarabæus carved on an emerald is a certain remedy against all poisons; nor is it less efficacious than the herb *moly*, which Mercury once gave to Ulysses. Nor is it only available against these; but it is of infinite service when worn in a ring, when any one wishes to obtain audience of a king or to ask a favour of a great man.

In some of the Mohammedan and pagan nations, the people still consider the art of writing as nearly allied to magic, and with them a scrap of paper with a few words written upon it is an excellent charm or amulet; and Mungo Park, when pressed by fatigue and hunger, during his travels in Africa, once obtained food by writing a *saphie*, or charm, for a Negro at whose home he lodged.

"THE HAND OF GLORY."

In the middle ages, in addition to the belief of numerous

charms and talismans to protect from disease and accident, many of which were perfectly impious, some singular figures were constructed for the strangest purposes; one, for instance, the Hand of Glory, as it was called, was supposed to be a sure protection to robbers when committing their crimes. It is thus described :

The Hand of Glory possesses much more dangerous properties, if it be true that robbers avail themselves of its power to cause sleep to overcome all the inmates of a house, that they may be enabled to plunder with impunity. This is effected by holding the charm over each person. This talisman is the hand of a robber executed for his crime: the blood is to be first extracted, and then it is to be prepared with saltpetre and pepper, and dried in the sun; when perfectly dry, it is used as a candle-stick, in which a candle is placed formed of the fat of the culprit, white wax, and sesame seed.

The belief in most of these strange and ridiculous errors existed much longer than it otherwise would have done, from the artificial importance with which they were clothed in consequence of the solemn endeavours of some learned writers to reason upon their properties, instead of treating the subject with the contempt it deserved.

It may be remarked, that the Arabs have great faith in certain superstitious charms, which they suppose will protect their horses from accidents. They use talismans written on a piece of triangular paper, which are put into a leathern purse of the same shape, and fastened round the animal's neck, as a defence against witchcraft from unlucky eyes. A couple of boar's tusks, joined at the extremities by a silver ring, are suspended from their mane to keep them from the farcy.—*Crichton's Arabia*.

VENICE GLASS.

This glass was made at Venice, of a pebble called *cuogolo*, resembling white marble found in the bed of the Tesino. Of this material drinking-glasses were formerly manufactured at Venice, which the credulous believed to have the property of exploding upon a poisoned liquid being poured into them! We can only refer this absurd belief to an exaggeration of the celebrity of Venice Glass. Thus we find it to have been proverbial as a standard of perfection. Howell says: "A good name is like Venice glass, quickly cracked, never to be amended; patched it may be." (*Familiar Letters*, p. 310.) Of this reputed romantic property of Venice glass, Mrs. Radcliffe has availed herself in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*; and Lord Byron thus adverts to it in *The Two Foscari*, act v. scene 1:

"Doge. I do feel athirst; will no one bring me here
A cup of water?"

* * * * *

I take *yours*, Loredano, from the hand
Most fit for such an hour as this.

Lor. Why so?

Doge. 'Tis said that our Venetian crystal has
Such pure antipathy to poisons, as
To burst if aught of venom touches it.

Lor. Well, sir?

Doge. Then it is false, or you are true;
For my own part, I credit neither: 'tis
An idle legend."

Sir Thomas Browne thus touches upon this legendary error:

"Though it be said that poison will break a Venice glass, yet have we not met any of that nature. Were there a truth herein, it were the best preservative for princes and persons exalted unto such fears; and surely far better than divers now in use. And though the best of China dishes, and such as the emperor doth use, be thought by some of infallible virtue to this effect; yet will they not, I fear, be able to elude the mischief of such intentions."—*Vulgar Errors*, b. vii. c. 17.

Venice glass had likewise the reputed property of miraculously remaining sound under very extraordinary circumstances. Credulous old Aubrey relates in his *Miranda*:

"In Dr. Bolton's sermons is an account of the Lady Honynwood, who despaired of her salvation. Dr. Bolton endeavoured to comfort her: said she (holding a Venice glass in her hand), 'I shall as certainly be damned as this glass will be broken;' and at that word, threw it hard on the ground, and the glass remained sound; which did give her great comfort. The glass is yet preserved among the *cimelia* of the family."

AMULETS.

An Amulet (some suppose the word to be of Arabic origin) hung round the neck, or carried in any other way about the person, is absurdly believed to have the effect of warding off morbid infections and other dangers, and even of curing diseases by which the body has already been attacked. Sir Thomas Browne refers to amulets "working" by emanations from their bodies upon those parts whereunto they are appended, and are yet not observed to abate their weight.

The phylacteries, or bits of parchment with passages from the Bible written upon them, which the Jews were wont to carry about with them, were amulets; of the same character are those inscribed with sentences from the Koran, which the Moorish priests sell to the negroes of Africa, and which the latter call *Fetishes*!

This superstition existed among the Greeks and Romans and early Christians, and is denounced by St. Chrysostom and others of the fathers. Even to our own day, it has continued to be an article of the popular creed that certain medical preparations, and other things, merely carried about the person,

have the power of repelling and healing diseases. Even the philosopher Robert Boyle assures us that he once experienced the efficacy of such an amulet to stop bleeding at the nose, for which he found most effectual "some moss of a dead man's skull." "For amulets against agues," says Sir Thomas Browne, "we use the chips of gallows, and places of execution." Camphor, volatile oil, pungent acids, &c., which as often used, and perhaps efficaciously, are repellents of contagion, can scarcely be termed amulets.—*See ante*, p. 128.

CRYSTAL.

This term may be properly applied to any symmetrical solid, whether transparent or opaque, though custom has almost restricted it to colourless bodies: as we say, the crystalline lens of the eye; and of water, "the crystal well."* On its discovery, the ancients, believing it to be water permanently congealed by extreme cold, from its transparency called it *Krustallos*, signifying also ice; but in time the term became used without attention being paid to its original meaning, and was applied to all the regular figures observed in minerals.

Rock Crystal, when of a violet or purple colour, becomes amethyst; when blue, it is the sapphire; when rose-colour, it is the ruby; when yellow, it is the occidental topaz; in short, the crystals take the names of the different gems which they resemble in colour.

Sir Thomas Browne, in a chapter on *Crystal*, says:

"Hereof the common opinion hath been, and still remaineth amongst us, that crystal is nothing else but ice or snow concreted, and by duration of time congealed beyond liquidation. Of which assertion, if prescription of time and numerosity of assertors were a sufficient demonstration, we might sit down herein, as an unquestionable truth; nor should there need ulterior disquisition. For few opinions there are which have found so many friends, or been so popularly received through all professions and ages. Pliny is positive in this opinion: '*Crystallus fit gelu vehementius concreto*.' The same is followed by Seneca, elegantly described by Claudian, not denied by Scaliger, somewhere affirmed by Albertus, Brasavolus, and directly by many others. The venerable fathers of the Church have also assented hereto: as Basil, in his *Hexameron*; Isidore, in his *Etymologies*; and not only Austin, a Latin friar, but Gregory the Great; and Jerome upon occasion of that term expressed in the first of Ezekiel.

All which notwithstanding, upon a strict inquiry we find the matter controvertible, and with much more reason denied than is yet affirmed. For though many have passed it over with easy affirmatives, yet there are also many authors that deny it; and the exact mineralogist hath rejected it. Diodorus, in his eleventh book, denieth it (if crystal be there taken in its proper acceptation, as Rhodiginus hath used it, and not for a diamond, as Salmasius hath expounded it); for in

* "His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well."—*Parnell's Hermit*. Hence also the popular comparison "clear as a well."

that place he affirmeth: '*Crystallum esse lapidem ex aquâ purâ concretum, non tamen frigore sed divini caloris vi.*' Solinus, who transcribed Pliny, and therefore in almost all subscribed unto him, hath in this point dissented from him: '*Putant quidam glacie coire, et in crystallum corporari, sed frustra.*' Mathiolus, in his Comment upon Dioscorides, hath with confidence rejected it. The same hath been performed by Agricola *de naturâ fossilium*; by Cardan, Boetius de Boot, Cæsius Bernardus, Sæmertus, and many more."

The chapter extends through nine small quarto pages; and towards the close, Sir Thomas agrees with the origin of the error, as stated above:

"The second and most common ground is from the name *Crystallus*, whereby in Greek both ice and crystal are expressed; which may, not duly considering, have from their community of name conceived a community of nature; and what was ascribed unto the one be not unfitly applicable unto the other. But this is a fallacy of equivocation, from a society in name inferring an identity in nature. By this fallacy was he deceived that drank aqua fortis for strong water: by this are they deluded who conceive spermaceti, which is found about the head, to be the spawn of the whale; or take *Sanguis Draconis* (which is the gumme of a tree) to be the blood of a dragon."—*Vulgar Errors*, book ii. chap. 1.

The error of supposing spermaceti to be found only in the head of the long-headed whale, as Browne supposed it to be, has already been explained at p. 94 of the present work.

Doctor Dee, in 1582, had a convex Crystal, which he pretended to have received from the angel Uriel; but which was probably suggested to him by the tricks of the fortune-tellers of Egypt. This crystal had the quality, when intently surveyed, of presenting apparitions, and even emitting sounds. The phenomena varied: sometimes the stone had to be turned about several ways before the right focus was obtained; sometimes the spirits appeared upon the stone; sometimes reflected upon parts of the room. But only one person could see the figure, or hear the sounds. "A medium," therefore, was requisite; and Dee succeeded at last in obtaining his "medium," in the person of one Edward Kelly.

There was nothing miraculous in Dr. Dee's Crystal. The inquirer was compelled to be satisfied with the testimony of the "medium," for he neither saw nor heard any thing himself.

Dee records in his Diary, published by the Camden Society:

"16th March 1576, Her majestie (Elizabeth) willed me to fetch my glass, so famous, and to show unto her some of the properties of it, which I did: her majestie, being taken down from her horse by the Earle of Leicester, did see some of the properties of that glass, to her majestie's great contentment and delight."

LOOKING-GLASS OMENS.

To break a Looking-glass is accounted a very unlucky accident. Should it be a valuable one this is literally true, which

is not always the case in similar superstitions. Mirrors were formerly used by magicians in their diabolical operations ; and there was an ancient kind of divination by the looking-glass : hence, it should seem, has been derived the present popular notion.

The breaking of a looking-glass betokens that its owner will lose his best friend. (See the Greek Scholia on the Clouds of Aristophanes.) Potter, in his *Antiquities of Greece*, says : “ When divination by water was performed with a looking-glass, it was called Catoptromancy : ” sometimes they dipped a looking-glass into the water, when they desired to know what was become of a sick person ; for, as he looked well or ill in the glass, accordingly they presumed of his future condition. Sometimes glasses were used without water.

Grose tells us, that “ Breaking a Looking-glass betokens a mortality in the family, commonly the master.” Bonaparte’s (Napoleon I.) superstition upon this point is often recorded. “ During one of his campaigns in Italy,” says M. de Constant, “ he broke the glass over Josephine’s portrait. He never rested till the return of the courier he forthwith despatched to assure himself of her safety, so strong was the impression of her death upon his mind.”

THE PHILOSOPHERS’ STONE.

In the opinion of the alchemists all the metals were compounds, the baser of them containing the same constituents as gold, but mixed with various impurities ; which being removed, the common metals were made to assume the properties of gold. The change was effected by what was termed *Lapis Philosophorum*, or the Philosophers’ Stone, which is commonly mentioned as a red powder possessing a peculiar smell. Dr. Thomson, in his *History of Alchemy*, describes the process for preparing the Stone in the words of an adept. He adds, that the Stone so prepared could hardly have been any thing else but an amalgam of gold ; and “ there is no doubt that amalgam of gold, if projected into melted lead, or tin, and afterwards cupellated, would leave a portion of gold ; all the gold, of course, that existed previously in the amalgam. It might therefore have been employed by impostors to persuade the ignorant that it was merely the Philosophers’ Stone ; but the alchemists who prepared the amalgam could not be ignorant that it contained gold.”

Bergmann considers some accounts of Transmutation to be entitled to a greater degree of credit than others. “ For doubtless,” he adds, “ if a person who has no faith in the change of alchemy should obtain by chance a small piece of the Philosophers’ Stone, and, on making the experiment alone in his closet, procure a quantity of gold heavier than the stone, will

it not be difficult to explain in what manner he was liable to be deceived?" Before the difficulty is required to be explained, the fact must be placed on incontestable evidence.

Ashmole, in the diary of his life, says: "1653, May 13: My father Backhouse, lying sick in Fleet-street, over against St. Dunstan's church, and not knowing whether he should live or die, about eleven of the clock told me in syllables the true matter of the Philosophers' Stone, which he bequeathed to me as a legacy." However, Backhouse recovered.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague (in a letter dated January 2, 1717), records, that "at Vienna there was a prodigious number of alchemists. The Philosophers' Stone," she says, "is the great object of zeal and science; and those who have more reading and capacity than the vulgar, have transported their superstition (shall I call it?) or fanaticism from religion to chemistry; and they believe in a new kind of transubstantiation, which is designed to make the laity as rich as the other kind has made the priesthood. This pestilential passion has already ruined several great houses. There is scarcely a man of opulence or fashion that has not an alchemist in his service; and even the Emperor is supposed to be no enemy to this folly in secret, though he has pretended to discourage it in public."

THE FALLING OF SALT.

Sir Thomas Browne observes on this omen:

The Falling of Salt is an authentic presagement of ill-luck, nor can every temper contemn it: from whence, notwithstanding, nothing can be naturally feared; nor was the same a general prognostic of future evil among the ancients, but a particular omination concerning the breach of friendship. For salt, as incorruptible, was the symbol of friendship, and before the other service was offered unto their guests; which, if it casually fell, was accounted ominous, and their amity of no duration. But whether salt were not only a symbol of friendship with man, but also a figure of amity and reconciliation with God, and was therefore observed in sacrifices, is a higher speculation.—*Vulgar Errors*, book v. chap. 23.

In Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" Judas Iscariot is represented overturning the salt; but "the superstition is too ancient and widely spread to have originated from Da Vinci's picture. He more probably, with an artist's instinct, embodied it in the painting, pointing out thereby the person of Judas to the most uneducated spectator. In Russia, where the mujiks never heard of Leonardo, and amongst the Celtic peasantry, the belief is in full force. It seems that the source of the impression is to be sought in the sacred and sacrificial character of salt, in early times, used as it was in all oblations to the deities. Its presence on a table hallowed the meal: hence the salt-cellar was deeply revered by the Romans, who transmitted their veneration to feudal times. Therefore, as the dropping of any of the sacrificial instruments was considered to be a seriously bad omen, it seems likely that the

same feeling prevailed in the case of the salt. Any sudden motion of the victim while standing before the altar was regarded with terror, probably because the salt placed on its head was in consequence spilt."—*Obligingly communicated by the Rev. F. Littledale, Norwich.*

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE FIRE AND CANDLE.

A blazing Fire is a casket of omens—as purses, coffins, swords, guns, bags of money, &c.; the believers in such forgetting that coal which readily cakes will yield all kinds of forms in abundance. Gay ridicules these omens :

Alas, you knew the cause too well !
The salt is spilt, to me it fell ;
Then, to contribute to my loss,
My knife and fork were laid across :
On Friday, too, the day I dread.
Would I were safe at home in bed !
Last night (I vow to Heaven 'tis true)
Bounce from the fire a coffin flew.
Next post some fatal news shall tell :
God send my Cornish friends be well !

Sir Thomas Browne observes upon the Candle :

That Candles and Lights burn dim and blue at the apparition of spirits may be true, if the ambient air be full of sulphureous spirits, as it happeneth oftentimes in mines, where damps and acid exhalations are able to extinguish them ; and may be also verified when spirits do make themselves visible by bodies of such effluvia. But of lower consideration is the common foretelling of strangers from the fungous parcels about the wicks of candles ; which only signifieth a moist and pluvius air about them, hindering the avolation of the light and favillous particles ; whereupon they are found to settle upon the *suast*.—*Vulgar Errors*, book v. chap. 24.

A NOISE IN THE HOUSE.

Unexplained noises in houses have doubtless often led to idle stories of their being “haunted.” An instance of this kind of nuisance is stated by a Correspondent of *The Builder* to have occurred at Ipswich, in one of three brick-built houses situated upon rising ground. This noise arose from the time the adjoining house was excavated to make a kitchen on the basement. At first the noise was not continuous, or nearly so, from about autumn, but returned about the beginning of April as loudly as ever. It took place only in the daytime, commencing at sunrise and stopping by degrees as the sun receded from the west ; the stiller and warmer the air, the more noise ; indeed a stiff breeze seemed to stop it. The sound was heard most in the basement and ground-floor, and was conveyed probably by the walls to the top of the house, a three-storied one. It resembled the moan of a small dog, commencing softly and ending suddenly ;

the duration ranging from a few seconds to five minutes, with varying intervals.

SPOTS IN THE NAILS.

Among the divinations vulgarly raised upon these appearances Cardan found some signs of most events that ever happened to him. Yet Sir Thomas Browne does not find "much considerable in that doctrine of chiromancy, that spots in the top of the nails do signify things past; in the middle, things present; and at the bottom, events to come. The white specks presage our felicity; blue ones, our misfortunes. That those in the nail of the thumb have significations of honour; those in the forefinger have riches; and so respectively in other fingers," &c. This saying has remained a nursery superstition unto our day: it is doubtless a remnant of a species of ancient divination.

The prediction is indicated in the following couplet, to be repeated touching the thumb and each finger in succession:

A gift, a friend, a foe,
A lover to come, a journey to go.

Sometimes the augury is expressed in general positive terms:

A gift on the thumb is sure to come;
A gift on the finger is sure to linger.

This mode of prognostication is not confined to England; for Whalley, in a note to Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, on the lines—

I know't by certain spots too in his teeth,
And on the nail of his mercurial finger—

quotes, for the poet's authority, Cardan.

THE RHINOCEROS' HORN.

The alleged preservative virtues of the Rhinoceros' horn must be regarded as a Popular Error. From the earliest times this horn has been supposed to possess mysterious properties,—to be capable of causing diseases and discovering the presence of poison; and in all countries where the rhinoceros exists, but especially in the East, such is still the opinion respecting it. In the details of the first voyage of the English to India, in 1591, we find rhinoceros' horns monopolised by the native sovereigns on account of their reputed virtues in detecting the presence of poison.

Thunberg observes, in his *Journey into Caffraria*, that—

"The horns of the rhinoceros were kept by some people, both in town and country, not only as rarities, but also as useful in diseases, and for the purpose of detecting poisons. As to the former of these intentions, the fine shavings were supposed to cure convulsions and spasms in children. With respect to the latter, it was generally believed that

goblets made of these horns would discover a poisonous draught that was poured into them, by making the liquor ferment till it ran quite out of the goblet. Of these horns goblets are made, which are set in gold and silver and presented to kings, persons of distinction, and particular friends, or else sold at a high price, sometimes at the rate of fifty rix-dollars each." Thunberg adds: "When I tried these horns, both wrought and unwrought, both old and young horns, with several sorts of poison, weak as well as strong, I observed not the least motion or effervescence; but when a solution of corrosive sublimate or other similar substance was poured into one of these horns, there arose only a few bubbles, produced by the air which had been enclosed in the pores of the horn and which were now disengaged."

Rankin (in his *Wars and Sports*), going through the sunderbunds of Bengal, fell in with a man who "possessed a small horn of a rhinoceros that had been killed in the woods; and this man (a Portuguese) had the same *universal* opinion of its virtues. On being asked how it ought to be used, he said that he put a small quantity of water in the concave part of the root, then held it with the point downwards and stirred the water with the point of an iron nail till it was discoloured, when the patient was to drink it."

Calmet, in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, published about 150 years since, observes that the horn of the rhinoceros is made use of by the Indian kings at table because, as is believed, "it sweats at the approach of any kind of poison whatever."

Sir Hamon L'Estrange concludes the unicorn of Job to be the *rhinoceros*, after many pages of careful and argumentative examination of his "shape and strength, and the seat, position, and portage of his horne."

Some writers consider this horn of power and excellence, in which the poisoned draught of secret malice discovers itself, to be that to which the Psalmist alluded ("My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn"); and consequently that its bearer, the "unicorn," was the rhinoceros.

THE VAMPIRE.

The Vampire of superstition, according to Horst, is a "dead body which continues to live in the grave; which it leaves, however, by night for the purpose of sucking the blood of the living, whereby it is nourished and preserved in good condition, instead of becoming decomposed like other dead bodies." Fischer states, "The bite of a vampire leaves in general no mark upon the person;" but, he fearfully adds, "it (the bite) is nevertheless speedily fatal," unless the bitten person protect himself by eating some of the earth from the grave of the vampire and smearing himself with his blood. Unfortunately, indeed, these measures are seldom, if ever, more than of temporary use. Fischer adds: "If through these precautions the life of the victim be prolonged for a period, sooner or later he ends

with becoming a vampire himself; that is to say, he dies and is buried, but continues to lead a vampire-life in the grave, nourishing himself by infecting others and promiscuously propagating vampirism."

This superstition survives to this day in the east of Europe, where, little more than a century ago, it was frightfully prevalent, and spread like a pestilence through Servia and Wallachia. Dr. Herbert Mayo, in his work entitled *On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions*, relates several instances of victims to this superstition, which he traces to "death-trance," produced by terror, and which, being mistaken for death itself, led to innumerable cases of premature interment.

THE ABSENCE OF INSECTS FOREBODING DEATH.

It has been observed that Fleas and other parasitic insects never infest a person who is near death; and so frequently has this been remarked, that it has become one of the popular signs of approaching dissolution. This is in all probability caused by the alteration in the state of the fluids immediately under the skin, either in quality or quantity. It must be upon the same principle that women and children are always more infested with the bed-bug and other parasitic insects than old men, whose sub-cutaneous fluids are scanty, and their skin in consequence more rigid and dry.—*Rennie's Insect Miscellanies*.

THE DEATH'S-HEAD MOTH.

The yellow and brown-tailed Moths, the Death-watch, and many other insects, have long been the subjects of man's fear; but the dread excited in England by the appearance, noises, or increase of insects is petty apprehension compared with the horror that the presence of the death's-head moth (*Acherontia atropos*) occasions to some of the more fanciful and superstitious natives of northern Europe.

In German Poland this insect is very common; and it is here called the "death's-head phantom," the "wandering death-bird," &c. The markings on the back represent to a fertile imagination the head of a perfect skeleton, with the limb-bones crossed beneath; its cry becomes the voice of anguish, the moaning of a child, the signal of grief. It is regarded not as the creation of a benevolent Being, but as the device of evil spirits, enemies to man, conceived and fabricated in the dark; and the very shining of its eyes is supposed to represent the fiery element, whence it is thought to have proceeded. Flying into the apartment in the evening, it sometimes extinguishes the light; foretelling war, pestilence, famine, and death, to man and beast. This insect has also been thought to be peculiarly gifted in having a voice, and squeaking like a mouse when handled or disturbed; but in truth no insect that we know of has the requisite organs to produce a genuine voice; it emits sounds by other means, probably all external.—*Knapp's Journal of a Naturalist*.

THE DEATH-WATCH.

Insects which are much more common than the Death's-head Moth, though from their minuteness not so often heard of, often strike the uneducated with terror as the messengers of death. We refer to the sound which most of our readers may have heard issuing from old timber or old books, resembling the ticking of a watch : whence the insect is called the Death-watch.

Sir Thomas Browne considered this marvellous story of great importance, and remarks :

Few ears have escaped the noise of the death-watch, that is, the little clicking sound heard often in many rooms, somewhat resembling that of a watch. And this is conceived to be an evil omen or prediction of some person's death ; wherein notwithstanding there is nothing of rational presage or just cause of terror unto melancholy and meticulous heads. For the noise is made by a little sheath-winged gray insect, found often in wainscot-benches and woodwork in the summer. We have taken many thereof, and kept them in thin boxes ; wherein I have heard and seen them work and knock with a little proboscis or trunk against the side of the box, like a *picus martius*, or woodpecker, against a tree. It worketh but in warm weather, and for the most part giveth not over under nine or eleven strokes at a time. He that could extinguish the terrifying apprehensions hereof might prevent the passions of the heart and many cold sweats in grandmothers and nurses, who in the sickness of children are so startled with these noises.—*Vulgar Errors*, b. ii. c. 7.

Swift endeavoured to perform this useful task by means of ridicule, thus :

“ A wood-worm
That lies in old wood, like a hare in her form :
With teeth or with claws it will bite, or will scratch ;
And chambermaids christen this worm a death-watch,
Because like a watch it always cries click :
Then woe be to those in the house that are sick !
For, sure as a gun, they will give up the ghost
If the maggot cries click when it scratches the post.
But a kettle of scalding hot water ejected,
Infallibly cures the timber affected :
The omen is broken, the danger is over ;
The maggot will die, the sick will recover.”

Seriously speaking, a little entomological knowledge will dispel all such fears for ever. It is now a received opinion, adopted upon satisfactory evidence, that the above sound is produced by certain beetles belonging to the timber-boring genus *Anobium* ; though some tick louder than others. When spring is far advanced, these insects commence their ticking as a call to each other, which is thus produced : raising itself upon its hind legs, with the body somewhat inclined, it beats its head with great force and agility upon the plane of position ; and its strokes are so powerful as to make a considerable impression if

they fall upon any substance softer than wood. The general number of distinct strokes in succession is from seven to nine or eleven. They follow each other quickly, and are repeated at irregular intervals. The noise exactly resembles that produced by tapping moderately with the nail upon a table; and when familiarised, the insect will answer very readily the tap of the nail. The superstition that the clicking of this insect is a death-omen is mentioned by Baxter in his *World of Spirits*, which obtained currency for its belief upwards of a century.

Gay has the line,

“The solemn death-watch click’d the hour she died;”

and Pope terms “death-watches physicians.”

OWL AND RAVEN OMENS.

Sir Thomas Browne observes upon these bird-presages :

That Owls and Ravens are ominous appearers, and preesignifying unlucky events, as Christians yet conceit, was an augurial conception. Because many ravens were seen when Alexander entered Babylon, they were thought to preominate his death; and because an owl appeared before the battle (with the Parthians near Charræ), it presaged the ruin of Crassus. Which, though decrepit superstitions, and such as had their nativity in times beyond all history, are fresh in the observation of many heads, and by the credulous and feminine party still in some majesty among us. And therefore the emblem of superstition was well set out by Ripa, in the picture of an owl, a hare, and an old woman. And it no way confirmeth the augurial consideration, that an owl is forbidden food in the law of Moses; or that Jerusalem was threatened by the raven and the owl in that expression of Isa. xxxiv., that it should be “a court for owls, that the cormorant and the bittern should possess it, and the owl and the raven dwell in it;” for thereby was only implied their ensuing desolation, as is expounded in the words succeeding: “He shall draw upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.”—*Vulgar Errors*, b. v. c. 23.

Upon the above passage, Dr. Wren notes :

The raven by his acute sense of smelling discerns the savour of the dying bodies at the tops of chimnies, and that makes them flutter about the windows, as they used to doe in the search of a carcasse. Now by-cause wherever they doe this, itt is an evident signe that the sicke party seldom escapes deathe, thence ignorant people counte them ominous, as foreboding deathe, and in some as causing deathe; whereof they have a sense indeed, but are noe cause at all. Of owles there is not the same opinion, especially in country-men, who thinke as well of them in the barne as of the cat in the house: but in greet cityes, where they are not frequent, their shrieking and horrid note in the night is offensive to women and children, and such as are weake or sicklye.

The supposed faculty of “smelling death” formerly rendered the presence or even voice of the raven ominous to all, as

The hateful messenger of heavy things,
Of death and dolour telling sad tidings.

And its unusually harsh croak, when illness is in the house,

is still regarded with alarm by the timid. Drayton, quoting Pliny, says :

“The greedy raven that doth call for death.”

And in the Rev. G. Warrington's poem, *The Spirit's Blasted Tree*, we find—

Three ravens gave the note of death,
As through mid air they wing'd their way ;
Then o'er his head in rapid flight
They croak—they scent their destin'd prey.

Ill omen'd bird ! as legends say,
Who hast the wondrous power to know,
While health fills high the throbbing veins,
The fated hour when blood must flow.

There are many impressive associations with the raven : it is frequently mentioned in our Bible history as employed by the Almighty to convey food to man ; and its young are described as being under the immediate care of the Great Creator. It has been signalised by Shakspeare, and referred to by Addison, Dryden, and Young, and indeed by many other of our poets. The raven not only has been, but still is, connected with the superstitions of this country ; and but lately Mr. Jesse was assured by “a sober hind” that his companion had been warned of his approaching death by a raven having always croaked when it flew over his head.

Owls screeching at night are signals of bad weather ; and upon this circumstance probably depends the evil name which this bird has received, since changes of weather are particularly dangerous to persons labouring under severe diseases. Indeed, among all birds of ill omen the owl stands foremost. Ancients and moderns have united to celebrate its fame as a harbinger of mischief and of death. Pliny denominates it a funeral bird, a monster of the night, the abomination of human kind. “The ill-faced owle, death's dreadful messengere,” is spoken of by Spenser in his *Faerie Queene*, amidst a woeful catalogue of harmful fowls ; and many a victim of superstition has quailed, when in the dead silence of the night this solemn boding sound has struck upon his ear.

THE SWALLOW.

The ill-luck attached to the killing of Swallows is thought by Sir Thomas Browne to be of Pagan origin. “For we read in Ælian, that these birds were sacred unto the Penates, or household gods, of the ancients, and therefore were preserved. The same they also honoured as the nuncios of the spring ; and we find in Athenæus that the Rhodians had a solemn song to welcome in the swallow.”

THE SEA-MEW

Is a bird of good omen to the people on the coast of Morlaix in Brittany. A small species called tarak, white with red beak and feet and a black spot on the head, appears in April and goes away in September. The period of its arrival is considered the commencement of the season of fine weather. Its perpetual cry is "Quit! quit! quit!" the synonym in Bas-breton for "Go! go! go!" The constant prayer of the women on these coasts is for the safety of their husbands: at Roscoff they have a practice of sweeping the chapel of the Holy Union after Mass, when they kneel down and blow the dust in the direction the boats have gone.

THE ROBIN AND WREN.

An odd superstition attaches to the Robin and the Wren: the tradition is, that if their nests are robbed, the cows will give bloody milk. Schoolboys rarely are found hardy enough to commit such a depredation on these birds, of which the common people in some parts of England have this legend:

Robinets and Jenny Wrens
Are God Almighty's cocks and hens.

MANDRAGORA.

Self-styled wandering Turks and Armenians, therefore believed to be vendors of genuine "Turkey Rhubarb," sometimes exhibit to idlers a root bearing a strong resemblance to the human frame. This is the far-famed Mandrake, the *Atropos mandragora* of Linnæus, which grows wild in the mountainous and shaded parts of Italy, Spain, and the Levant, where it is also cultivated in gardens. The root has been termed *Semi-homo*. Hence, says Columella:

Quamvis semihominis vesano gramine festa,
Mandragora pariat flores mæstamque cicutam.

The word *vesano* clearly refers to the supposed power it possessed of exciting delirium. It was also named *Circæa*, from its having been one of the mystic ingredients employed in Circe's spell; although the wonderful Mandragora was ineffectual against the more powerful herb the *Moly*, which Ulysses received from Mercury. According to Josephus, the plant called *Buaras* was also gifted with the faculty of keeping off evil spirits; and Albertus the Great affirms that the root had a more powerful action when growing under a gibbet, and is brought to greater perfection by the nourishing secretions that drop from the criminal's dangling corpse.—(*Dr. Millingen's Curiosities of Medical Experience*.) This plant is common in the

Greek Islands, where even now the young Greeks are said to wear small pieces of mandrake as love-charms. (See also *Things not generally Known*, p. 102.)

The vague credulity of the peasant of our times agrees with the systematic mythology of pagan ages; and nations whom the ocean separates are united in the same delusions: thus the village gossip retails, though in ignorance of so doing, the supposed exploits of the divinities of classical antiquity; and the *Hamadryads* of Greece and the *Elves* of Scandinavia join the phantoms who swarm around the wizard when, according to the poet, he enters that gloomy dell,—

. where the sad mandrake grows
Whose groans are deathful, the dead-numbing nightshade,
The stupefying hemlock, adder's tongue,
And martagon.—The shrieks of luckless owls
He hears, and croaking night-crows in the air;
Green-bellied snakes, blue fire-drakes in the sky,
And giddy flitter-mice with leathern wings,
And scaly beetles with their habergeons,
That make a humming murmur as they fly.
There, in the stocks of trees while fays do dwell,
And span-long elves that dance about a pool
With each a little changeling in their arms,
The airy spirits play with falling stars
And mount the sphere of fire.

THE SHAKING ASPEN

Is popularly said to have been the tree which formed the cross upon which our Saviour was crucified; and thenceforth its boughs have been filled with horror and trembled ceaselessly. Unfortunately for the probability of this story, the shivering of the aspen in the breeze may be traced to other than a supernatural cause. The structure of its foliage is particularly adapted for motion: a broad leaf is placed upon a long footstalk, so flexible as scarcely to be able to support the leaf in an upright position: the upper part of this stalk, on which the play or action seems mainly to depend, is, contrary to the nature of footstalks in general, perfectly flattened; and an eminent botanist, Dr. J. Stokes, has observed, is placed at a right angle with the leaf, being thus particularly fitted to receive the impulse of every wind that blows. The stalk is furnished with three strong nerves, placed parallel and acting in unison with each other; but towards the base the stalk becomes round, and then the nerves assume a triangular form, and constitute three distinct supports and counteractions to each other's motions.

THE GROANING ASH.

Wonderful stories are related of the Ash-tree, doubtless

backed by the phenomena of its growth. Sir J. E. Smith mentions an ash-tree which grew from a seed on a wall, but stopped its growth for a while, having exhausted the nourishment there, and then sent a root down the wall until it reached the ground; as soon as this was established in the soil, the tree resumed its vegetation and became of larger growth. The seed of the ash is called Ash-keys, the failure of a crop of which is in Northamptonshire said to portend a death in the Royal Family.

. In a letter dated July 7, 1606, it is stated that at Brampton, near Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire, "an ash-tree shaketh in body and boughs thereof, sighing and groaning like a man troubled in his sleep, as if it felt some sensible torment. Many have climbed to the top of it, who heard the groans more easily than they could below. But one among the rest being on the top thereof, spake to the tree; but presently came down much aghast, and lay grovelling on the earth three hours speechless. In the end reviving, he said, 'Brampton, Brampton, thou art much bound to pray!' The Earl of Lincoln caused one of the arms of the ash to be lopped off, and a hole bored through the body; and then was the sound or hollow voice heard more audibly than before, but in a kind of speech which they could not comprehend." This is the second wonderful ash produced by past ages in this district, according to tradition Ethelreda's budding staff having shot out into the first.

FERN AND FERN-SEED.

Mr. Jesse, in his charming *Scenes and Occupations of Country Life*, remarks that the ancients believed that Fern had no seeds. Our ancestors imagined that it had seed which was invisible. Hence, from an extraordinary mode of reasoning, founded on the fantastic doctrine of signatures, they concluded that those who possessed the secret of wearing this seed about them would also become invisible. This superstition the good sense of our great poet Shakspeare taught him to ridicule:

Gadshill. We steal as in a castle cock-sure; we have the receipt of fern-seed, we walk invisible.

Chamberlain. Nay, I think rather you are more beholden to the night than the fern-seed for your walking invisible.—*Henry IV.* part i. act ii. scene 1.

It would appear that this absurd notion was not totally exploded in the time of Addison. He laughs at a doctor

Who has arrived at the knowledge of the green dragon and red dragon, and had discovered the female fern-seed: nobody knew what this meant; but the green and red dragon so amused the people that the doctor lived very comfortably upon them.—*Tatler*, No. 240.

There is a very common idea among the peasantry in this country that the roots of the fern are connected with each other all over the kingdom, so that the termination of the root of any one fern is not to be found. Mr. Jesse traced a root

to a considerable distance, but could not arrive at the end of it.

Mr. Edwin Lees, F.L.S., notes thus the belief in the wonderful properties of fern-seed :

“The country-people in Worcestershire, as my antiquarian friend Mr. Jabez Allies informs me, still traditionally keep up the old belief in the mystic powers of the ‘Fern-seed,’ which was supposed to make the gatherer ‘walk invisible.’ The saying is, that the fern blooms and seeds only at twelve o’clock on *Midsummer Night*; and to catch the seed twelve pewter-plates must be taken. The wondrous seed, it is affirmed, will pass through eleven of the plates, and rest only upon the twelfth! Such an idea may now be smiled at; but the philosophers of a past age believed something very similar, and even taught that demons watched to convey away the fern-seed as it fell ere any one could possess themselves of it. To ‘walk invisible’ was said, and at one time believed, to result from possessing the fern-seed.”

ST. JOHN’S WORT.

Mistaking the meaning of some medical writers, who, from a supposition of its utility in hypochondriacal disorders, have given St. John’s Wort the name of devil’s flight (*fuga demonum*), the common people in France and Germany gather it with great ceremony on St. John’s day, and hang it in their windows as a charm against storms, thunder, and evil spirits. In Scotland also it is carried about as a charm against witchcraft and enchantment; and the people fancy it cures rosy milk, which they suppose to be under some malignant influence. As the red flowers rubbed between the fingers yield a red juice, it has obtained the name of *Sanguis hominis* (man’s blood) among other fanciful medical writers.

Bassardus Visontius (*Ant. Philos.*) commends to one troubled with heart-melancholy “Hypericon, or St. John’s wort,” gathered on a Friday in the hour of Jupiter, *when it comes to his effectual operation (that is about the full moon in July); so gathered, and borne or hung about the neck, it mightily helps this affection, and drives away all phantasticall spirits.*—*Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy*, part ii. sec. 5.

THE HERB SAGE.

Our common garden-herbs possess undoubtedly valuable properties. These it was the common practice of the leech to exaggerate. Take the case of the Sage plant, whose reputation enthusiasts had raised. It was good against infection, and had such special properties that, though it was not asserted that immortality would result from its use, it was demanded why any one should die that had sage in his garden :

“Cur moriatur homo cui salvia crescit in horto?”

Truth compelling the disappointing answer :

“Contra vim mortis non est medicamen in hortis.”

Notes and Queries, No. 266.

“THE DEVIL’S BIT SCABIOUS.”

Old Gerarde quaintly says: “The great part of this root seemeth to be bitten away: old fantastick charmers report that the divel did bite it for envie, because it is an herbe that hath so many good virtues and is so beneficial to mankinde.” Whereupon Sir J. E. Smith as quaintly observes: “The malice of the devil has unhappily been so successful, that no virtue can now be found in *the remainder* of the root or herb.”

FAIRY RINGS.

This is the popular name for circles of dark-green grass occasionally seen on old pasture-land; round which, according to vulgar belief, the

Elfe-queen, with hire jolly compaignie,
Danced full oft in many a grene mede.

Various are the conjectures as to the cause of these verdant circles. Jessop and Walker, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, ascribe them to lightning; others maintain that they are occasioned by ants, which are frequently found in great numbers in the ring; but they are, correctly speaking, attributed to a small esculent fungus called the fairy-ringed *Agaricus Orcades*. (See *Things not generally Known*, p. 108.) In whatever way this phenomenon may be explained, a poetical charm will always linger around it in the superstition that the moonlight fairies there tripped their merry roundelays:

“Ye demi-puppets, that
By moonlight do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites.”

Shakspeare’s Tempest.

FAIRY BUTTER

Is the popular name for star-jelly (*Tremella mesenterica*), a yellowish gelatinous substance found upon rotten wood or fallen timber; supposed by country people to fall from the clouds.

THE WILL-O’-THE WISP.

This phenomenon, known also as “Jack-o’-Lantern” and “Ignis fatuus,” has terrified many a simple-minded rustic; whereas it is simply the phosphuretted hydrogen gas which rises from stagnant waters and marshy ground, its origin being probably in the decomposition of animal substances. It is not a whit more wonderful than the gas we may see burning in the streets of any large town, except that the will-o’-the-wisp rises spontaneously, while man obtains or manufactures the gas from coal by half-burning it.

“Ah, homely swains! your homeward steps ne’er lose,
 Nor let dark Will mislead you o’er the heath;
 Dancing in murky night o’er fen and lake,
 He glows to draw you onward to your death
 In his bewitch’d, low, marshy, willow brake!”

The Russians believe that wandering lights, our will-o’-the-wisp, are the souls of still-born children. They desire not to lure the traveller astray in moors and marshes; but that the restless little beings, belonging neither to heaven nor earth, may not rest till they have found their bodies.

THE BAY-TREE AND LIGHTNING.

The Bay-tree was represented in the temples of the Greeks as binding the brows of Apollo, their god of poetry; it formed numerous ornaments in their sacred edifices, and was wreathed into the shape of coronets, as prizes for the victors in the games of the circus. It was a common belief in those times that the bay was never struck by lightning; and Pliny, the Roman historian, relates that the Emperor Tiberius always crowned himself with bay during a thunderstorm. It was also the agent in many popular superstitions, a few of which have descended to our times.

If a few of the leaves were thrown into the fire and cracked violently, it was a good sign; if, on the contrary, they burnt without noise, it was unlucky: and a few placed under the pillow was an infallible method to obtain pleasant dreams!

The withering of bay-trees was, according to Shakspeare, a death-omen. Thus, in *Richard II.*:

’Tis thought the king is dead; we will not stay,
 The bay-trees in our country are all wither’d.

If *House-leek* were grown upon a roof, it was believed that the house would not be stricken with lightning. And it was thought that if a *fir-tree* were touched, withered, or burned with lightning, its owner would soon die.

THUNDER-TERROR.

No natural effect gives such impressions of divine fear as Thunder; which we may see by the examples of some wicked emperors, who, though they were atheists and made themselves gods, yet confessed a greater divine power when they heard it by trembling and hiding themselves:

Cœlo tonantem credimus Jovem.—*Horace.*

And Lucretius speaks it of Epicurus, as a thing extraordinary and peculiar to him, that the very sound of thunder did not make him superstitious. Yet the prophets’ and apostles’ voice

is truly termed louder ; for, as St. Paul says, the voice of the Gospel was heard all over the habitable world.

Every age and country has been impressed with the awe of thunder : the naked savage, who flies from his lonely shore for protection, and the royal sufferer of Sophocles,—

“ He stood ; and o’er his face his hands he spread,
Shading his eyes, as if with terror struck
At something horrible to human sight ;”

in short, from the peasant, “who woos terror to delight him,” to the silken baron of civilisation, or the philosopher pent up in his own varnished unbelief.—*Cameleon Sketches, by the Author of the present Work.*

SATURDAY’S MOON.

Mr. Edwin Lees, F.L.S., notes as common in Worcestershire this old weather-saw. Taking shelter near Berrow Hill from heavy rain, a cottager told him that the new moon having been on a Saturday, there must follow, according to the old adage, twenty days of wind or rain ; for

“ If the moon on a Saturday be new or full,
There always *was* rain, and there always *will*.”

Forster, in his *Encyclopædia of Natural Phenomena*, says (writing in 1827) :

A vulgar prejudice has prevailed from time immemorial in Sussex, that a *Saturday’s moon* brings blowing and wet weather. By some accident, this has proved very true during the last twenty years. To ascribe such a phenomenon to the occurrence of the new moon on the day specially dedicated to Saturn, must of course obviously appear superstitious ; but there may be natural causes why the conjunction of the sun and moon, happening at such diurnal periods, may in the long-run turn out to be connected with rough weather ; and these periods, once falling on Saturday, would for a long time continue to do so : hence may have arisen this vulgar notion. Old shepherds, gardeners, hunters, and men of education, have alike testified to the fact.

ABSURDITIES IN MEDICINE.

The industrious nosologist Sauvages has calculated that there are about 2,400 disorders to which the human frame is liable, and for which it is our sacred duty to investigate every object in nature that can alleviate them. At first, almost every thing was indiscriminately received ; and then as arbitrarily rejected. Experience has at length enabled us to select from the vast farrago those which really possess the reparative power, and to establish a system which is pretty universally recognised throughout all parts of the globe that have been illuminated by the torch of science. No longer does the talisman, the amulet, work upon a disordered imagination. Charms, witchcraft, and astrology, have lost their influence ; and although for a time some daring quackery absorbs the public at-

tention, the good sense of the community, aided by the scrutinising vigilance of the medical world, overwhelms it with the contempt it merits. The sponge that wiped the consecrated table of the Pope is no longer superstitiously venerated as a healer of wounds; nor does a throng of unhealthy individuals surround the carriage of our kings to obtain the royal touch, once thought to be a specific against scrofula. We no longer find, as in our first pharmacopœias, remedies in human skulls powdered, in parings of the nails, in wolf's liver, in common bed-bugs,—all of which, in their appropriate Latin names, obtained the sanction of our learned bodies. The progress of the *Materia Medica* is now less impeded by superstition, by credulity, ignorance, impudence, false theory, avarice, and a blind obedience to the writings of the ancients. Still, however, much remains to be done, and diligent examination is necessary before we rashly receive into our pharmacopœias substances whose effects upon the tissues of the human body are not thoroughly understood.—*Dr. Sigmond.*

In an *Exposition of Vulgar and Common Errors*, by Thomas Browne Redivivus (one of a series of clever “Small Books on Great Subjects,” published by the late Mr. Pickering), we find the following pertinent remarks upon errors of this class :

“In times past, when a man fell sick he was wont, if he were great enough to find that expense practicable, to send for some oracle for counsel; as Ahaziah, albeit he might have known better, seeing that he was of Israelitish blood, sent messengers unto Baal, the god of flies, at Ekron, to inquire concerning the disease he was suffering from; and if this habit infected even the people chosen to be the depositaries of the truth, we may well guess how prevalent it must have been among the heathen. To this succeeded the belief in particular shrines of Christian saints; and you shall even yet see, it may be in some chapel of this kind in a remote place, where *the ancient superstition surviveth merely under a change of name*, as great number of *ex-voto* offerings of silver and waxen eyes, legs, arms, and the like, as ever covered the walls of the temple of Delphi. Now-a-days superstitions of this kind have taken a fresh course; and notwithstanding that they no longer enrich the priests of Æsculapius, or of Apollo, or of Isis, they nevertheless set up for themselves some living idol; and he being supposed, like the Pythoness of old, to be inspired with a certain divine afflatus, they pay their offerings to him as religiously as ever did any ancient votary of the god or the saint, and trust to him with as implicit a faith: witness the tales I have heard of a certain Mr. St. John Long, who in regard to the exorations he practised upon his votaries might haply be considered as an avatar of the Ekronitish god of flies, whose fame tempted even the king of Israel to apply to him; for, with the aid of some French or German critic, I doubt not it might be proved that Baal-Zebub was none other than an emplastrum of cantharides.”

IMAGINATIVE CURES.

The power of imagination in curing diseases is much stronger than many persons are disposed to credit. To such influence

may be attributed much of the success of many *nostrums*: as of the Anodyne Necklace, which is formed of the roots of *hyoscyamus*, or henbane, and is worn by children to assist their teething.*

This mode of applying medicaments appears to be now out of fashion; but it formerly obtained a high reputation. It is said that the fourth book of the Iliad has often cured intermittent fever in this way; the strength of the language and the warmth of action that pervades this portion of Homer's magnificent poem being such, that it was metaphorically said to be sufficient to cure a sick man of an ague. Some individuals, not understanding poetic metaphors, actually converted this saying into a remedy, and wore a portion of vellum containing this book round the neck. Serenus Sammonicus, a very learned physician, has ordered that for the relief of ague it should be applied to the head; and cures are said to have been thus effected. Such is the power of imagination. Dr. Sigmond relates, that a poor woman having applied to a physician for the cure of an affection of the breast, he gave her a prescription which he directed should be applied to the breast. She returned at the end of a few days to offer her grateful thanks for the cure which he had effected; and on making inquiry as to the mode of action, he learned that his patient had very carefully tied the prescription round her neck!

For a superstitious treatment of disease at Uffculme, in East Devon, see a communication of a resident squire in 1855. It is a practice there to carry a child fasting on Sunday morning into three parishes, which, according to popular belief, is of great service in hooping-cough. For a sore-throat, the eighth psalm is read seven times for three successive mornings over the patient.

CURE-MONGERING QUACKS.

If we may judge by the prosperity of the proprietors of *nostrums*, belief in miraculous cures is almost as sound as in the days before the schoolmaster's rule. As a record of the fallacy of the system, it is related that Lord Gardenstone, himself a valetudinarian, took the pains to inquire for those persons who had actually attested marvellous cures, and found that more than two-thirds of the number died very shortly *after they had been cured*. Sir Robert Walpole, and Lords Bolingbroke and Winnington, were killed by cure-mongers.

Footo thus wittily lampoons an empiric with a system: "Jaundice proceeds from many myriads of little flies, of a yellow colour, which fly about the system; now to cure this, I make the patient take a certain quantity of the ova, or eggs, of spiders. These eggs, when taken into

* The Anodyne Necklace was strongly recommended by Dr. Turner, its inventor; and by Dr. Chamberlain, who possessed the secret!

the stomach, by the warmth of that organ vivify ; and being vivified, of course they immediately proceed to catch the flies : thus the disease is cured, and I then send the patient down to the seaside to wash all the cobwebs out of the system.

THE PHYSICIAN'S CANE.

The Gold-headed Cane formerly carried by physicians was long viewed as containing some safeguard against infection.

VERVAIN AND TOADS.

We read of Vervain and baked Toads, worn in silken bags around the neck, as charms for the Evil ; and this nostrum was administered within our time, in Dorset, where a doctor held a yearly fair or feast ; his charm being the hind-legs of a toad, worn in a silken bag about the neck, and lotion and salve applied until the cure was completed, or until the next year's fair !

DOCTRINE OF SIGNATURES.

This doctrine subsisted for a considerable time among medical practitioners, and gave rise to the *names* of many plants, from the resemblance of their leaves and roots to the form of many parts of the human body ; such as lung-wort, liver-wort, spleen-wort, &c.

The Tench fish was formerly recommended as a sovereign remedy for jaundice ; and it is probable that the golden colour of the fish, when in high season, induced the ignorant to suppose that it was given by Providence as a *signature* to point out its medicinal quality.

SYMPATHETIC POWDER.

The doctrine of Sympathetic cures prevailed among the Anglo-Saxons to a great extent. It appears from the 31st canon of Egbert's Penitential, that women sometimes took the blood of their husbands as a medicine. This usage was probably founded on some old heathen superstition, and popular credulity was likely to gather strength from ecclesiastical prohibition.—*Soames's Hist. Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. i. p. 264.

Sir Kenelm Digby's " Powder of Sympathy," the celebrated remedy of the middle of the seventeenth century, derived its virtues, not from its composition, but from the mode of its application ; for it was not to be applied to the wound, but to the weapon by which the wound was inflicted : the wound was ordered to be merely closed up, and was then taken no further care of. Most men of sense, indeed, ridiculed the proposal ; but after being fully tried, it was found that the sympathetic mode of treating wounds was more successful than those plans which proceeded

upon what were considered scientific principles; and it continued to gain ground in public estimation, until at length some innovator ventured to try the experiment of *closing up the wound without applying the sympathetic powder to the sword*. Wiseman, who wrote about fifty or sixty years after the introduction of this mysterious operation by Sir Kenelm Digby, in describing the importance of keeping the divided parts in union, says, “for here nature will act her part by the application of blood and nourishment to both sides indifferently, and finish the *coalities* without your further assistance. And this is that which gives such credit to the Sympathetic Powder,” by which wounds were to be cured, although the patient was out of sight; a piece of quackery scarcely credible. The virtues of this powder, Sir Kenelm maintained, were thoroughly inquired into by King James, his son the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Buckingham, with other persons of the highest distinction; they were all registered among the observations of the great chancellor Bacon, and were to be added by way of appendix to his lordship’s Natural History.

Blagrave, in his *Astrological Practice of Physic*, gives the following receipt for Digby’s famed Sympathetic Powder: “Take Roman vitriol six or eight ounces, beat it very small in a mortar, sift it through a fine sieve, when the sun enters Leo. Keep it in the heat of the sun by day, and dry by night, and marvellous cures may be done by it.”

THE ADDER-STONE,

Anguinum ovum, was a fabulous kind of egg, said to be produced by the saliva of a cluster of serpents, and possessed of certain magical virtues; the superstitious belief in which was very prevalent among the ancient Britons, and there still remains a tradition of it in Wales. This wondrous egg seems to have been nothing more than a bead of glass, used by the Druids as a charm to impose upon the people, whom they taught to believe that the possessors of it would be fortunate in all their undertakings. The method of ascertaining its genuineness was no less extraordinary than the powers attributed to it. It was to be enchased in gold and thrown into a river; and if it was genuine, it would swim against the stream. Pliny gives a similar account of it.*

STY-AN-EYE.

This is a small, troublesome, inflamed pimple at the edge of the eyelid; the charm for reducing which is, rubbing the part affected nine times with a wedding-ring, or any other piece of

* Is not this the origin of our nursery-tale of “Mother Goose and the Golden Egg?”

gold. In the Anglo-Latin Lexicon, 1440, occurs, "Styanye yn the eye;" and in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Mad Lovers*:

I have a sty here, Chilax;
I have no gold to cure it, not a penny,
Not one cross, cavalier.

The name of "Golden Ointment," for diseases of the eye, was doubtless borrowed from the above practice.

ASTROLOGICAL MEDICINES.

Although the idea of Astrology is now lost among the humbler classes, the virtues of its nostrums are traditionally believed; and there are still to be met with in the stock of the village druggist "the oil of bricks," "the oil of swallows," "the oil of stones," and "the oil of earth-worms;" all of which had their virtues when astrologically made.—*Christmas's Cradle of the Twin Giants*, &c., vol. i. p. 120.

ARABS AND THE PLAGUE.

The Arabs seldom employ medicine for the Plague; but, though predestinarians, the common belief in Europe is erroneous that supposes they use no precautionary measures. Burckhardt states, that many of the townsmen fled from Medina to the desert; alleging as an excuse, that although the distemper was a messenger from heaven, sent to call them to a better world, yet, being conscious of their unworthiness, and that they did not merit this special mark of grace, they thought it more advisable to decline it for the present, and make their escape from the town. The Sembawees have a superstitious custom of leading a she-camel through the town, covered with feathers, balls, and all sorts of ornaments; after which it is slaughtered, and the flesh thrown to the dogs. By this process they hope to get rid of the malady at once, as they imagine that it has been concentrated in the body of the devoted animal.—*Hist. Arabia*, by A. Crichton.

THE END OF THE WORLD FORETOLD.

An epidemic terror of the End of the World has several times spread over the nation. The most remarkable was that which seized Christendom about the middle of the tenth century, when, in France, Germany, and Italy, fanatics preached that the thousand years prophesied in the Apocalypse as the term of the world's duration were about to expire, and that the Day of Judgment was at hand. This delusion was discouraged by the Church, but it spread rapidly among the people. The scene of the Last Judgment was expected to be at Jerusalem, where, in the year 1000, a host of pilgrims, smitten with terror as with a plague, awaited the coming of the Lord.

During seasons of great pestilence, men have often believed the prophecies of crazed fanatics, that the end of the world was come. Credulity is always greatest in times of calamity. During the great plague which ravaged all Europe between the years 1345 and 1350, it was generally considered that the end of the world was at hand. The plague in Milan was actually foretold a year before it broke out. A large comet appeared in 1628, upon which the opinions of astrologers were divided; but the greater number, founding their judgment upon its pale colour, thought it portended a pestilence.—(See *Mackay's Extraordinary Popular Delusions*, vol. i. p. 223; a work of interesting research and well-considered deduction.)

Philosophers have predicted the destruction of the world. In 1736 the famous Whiston foretold that the earth would be destroyed in that year, on the 13th of October. Crowds of persons went out on the appointed day to the suburbs to see the destruction of London. A satirical account of this folly is given in Swift's *Miscellanies*, vol. iii., entitled *A true and faithful Narrative of what passed in London on a Rumour of the Day of Judgment*.

Earthquakes have been predicted as the cause of the world's destruction. In 1761 two slight shocks were felt in London, with exactly the interval of a month between each; when a crackbrained soldier foretold there would in another month be a third shock, which would entirely destroy London. Even so lately as 1842 there was a similar prediction, stated to be founded upon two old prophecies in the British Museum. The alarm was great; but the prophecies could not be found, and the whole has since been acknowledged as an invention to scare timid and credulous persons.

Among other recent hypotheses is, that the earth and sun are getting further and further apart every year, and that in process of time the fructifying power, the physical vitality of our planet, will necessarily become less and less, until living beings will perish from want of food, light, and warmth; and the potato-disease, the vine-disease, and the diminished supply of fruit have been referred to as evidences of deterioration in the earth's producing powers. Others contend that the earth is getting near to the sun, and that we shall be drawn into his fiery vortex; others, that the sun is going out like a lamp, having burnt his appointed time; and still others, that the well-known spots on the sun's disc are so increasing in size and number as to endanger the vitality of the system!

DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD BY A COMET.

The early ideas of comets were very extraordinary. Aristotle considered them to be accidental fires, or meteors kindled

in the atmosphere. Kepler supposes them to be monsters generated in celestial space !

Dr. Thomas Burnet says, that the comets seem to him to be nothing else but (as one may say) the dead bodies of the fixed stars, unburied, and not as yet composed to rest; they, like shadows, wander up and down through the various regions of the heavens, till they have found fit places for their residence, which having pitched upon, they stop their irregular course, and being turned into planets, move circularly about some star.—*Charles Blount's Miscellaneous Works*, p. 63.

Sir Thomas Browne doubtfully inquires

whether comets, or blazing stars, be generally of such terrible effects as elder times have conceived them; for since it is found that many from whence these predictions are drawn have been above the moon, why may they not be qualified from their positions and aspects which they hold with stars of favourable natures; or why, since they may be conceived to arise from the effluvia of other stars, they may not retain the benignity of their originals; or, since the natures of the fixed stars are astrologically differenced by the planets, and are esteemed martial or jovial, according to the colours whereby they answer these planets, why, although the red comets do carry the portentions of Mars, the brightly-white should not be of the influence of Jupiter or Venus, answerably unto Cor Scorpii and Arcturus, is not absurd to doubt?—*Vulgar Errors*, book vi. chap. 14.

In early ages comets were regarded merely with a superstitious awe as the omens of evil to mankind, foreboding war and pestilence, famine, earthquakes, inundations, and a host of other dire consequences. Louis le Debonnaire, when asked why he evinced a dread of the comet of 837, which was flaming in the sky, replied to the effect that he felt no fear of the comet itself, but he was alarmed at the signification of that sign, in this instance his own death. The *forms* of these objects often struck terror into the people. The comet of 1527 is described as having the form of a bended arm, with a huge sword, with javelins and smaller swords, terrifying the spectators, who became almost lifeless with fear.

Dr. Halley first gave a definite form to cometary apprehensions, when, as one result of his calculations relating to the comet of 1680, and its near approach to the earth, he said :

But may the great God avert a shock or contact of such great bodies moving with such forces (which, however, is manifestly by no means impossible), lest this beautiful order of things be entirely destroyed and reduced into its ancient chaos.

Whiston, in his *Theory of the Earth*, contributed not a little to fan the flame which Halley had called into existence.

He attributed the earth's diurnal rotation on her axis to an oblique shock from this comet, and at great length endeavoured to prove that the same body passed so near us at the very time when the Deluge was fixed by chronologists, that the earth must have been enveloped in the atmosphere and tail of the comet; whence arose the forty days' rain

which led to the destruction of the ancient world ; and in similar detail he discusses the phenomena of the general conflagration. Some of these are horrible enough ; here is a specimen : “The atmosphere of the earth, before the conflagration begins, will be oppressed with meteors, exhalations, and steams, and these in so dreadful a manner, in such prodigious quantities, and with such confused motions and agitations, that the sun and moon will have the most frightful and hideous countenances, and their ancient splendour will be entirely obscured ; the stars will seem to fall from heaven, and all manner of horrid representations will terrify the inhabitants of the earth.”

Dr. Wetenhall, Bishop of Cork, wrote a pamphlet to calm the apprehensions of “diverse persons, who were so strangely struck (with this comet) that their faces were grown almost like the comet, only a blacker pale.”

The preceding is abridged from a fasciculus on the Comet of 1556, by Mr. Russell Hind, the astronomer, who adds :

Nor are we without passages in the works of several philosophers who have lived nearer to the present epoch which might appear to warrant alarm under these circumstances. The celebrated French geometer Laplace thus describes the probable effects of a collision of the earth with a large comet : “It is easy to represent the consequences of the earth’s encountering the shock of a comet. The axis and motion of rotation being changed, the seas abandon their former position and rush to the new equator ; great part of men and animals are drowned in the universal deluge, or destroyed by the violent shock to the terrestrial globe ; entire species annihilated ; all the monuments of human industry swept away ;—such are the disasters which might be produced.”

The popular terror was greatly excited by Lalande, the astronomer, in 1773, predicting the collision of the earth with a comet. The comet of 1811 was thought to have had a beneficial effect upon the vintage of southern France. Who has not heard of the comet wine of 1811 ? This comet is well known to have been regarded by many superstitious minds as the baleful star of Napoleon, and the precursor of the disastrous expedition to Russia, which was on foot before the comet had travelled far beyond unassisted vision.

A German astronomer, in 1857, predicted the reappearance of the Great Comet of 1264 and 1556 (considered to be identical) on the 13th of June in that year, when it would destroy the world ! This prediction spread terror over some parts of Europe. In Austria, the country people, in expectation of what was to happen, ceased to till their fields, and wasted their time in idleness.

To meet this alarm, Mr. Hind, in 1857, published the work already referred to, wherein he thus replies to the question, *Is danger to be apprehended from the near approach of a comet to the earth, or from its collision with our globe ?*

As regards the chance of *mechanical danger*, so to speak, consequent on the actual *shock*, if such it can be termed, of a comet, even though it were moving in an opposite direction to that of the earth in her orbit

(or with a possible velocity of some forty miles per second), we may rest assured there are few, if any, of these bodies constituted of materials of sufficient density or solidity to produce very unpleasant effects in the event of a collision, which at the worst would be comparable only to a meeting with a huge cushion. Neither is there any reason for apprehension of the effects of a comet's *attraction* upon the waters of our globe; for it may be mathematically demonstrated that, even allowing a comet to be of nearly equal mass with the earth, it could not remain long enough in a position to operate upon the ocean in such a manner as to overwhelm the continents, and thus lead to calamitous consequences.*

Nevertheless, *the sudden commingling of the nebulousity of a comet with the earth's atmosphere* (judging from effects in the comets of 1680, 1835, &c.) *might* be attended with serious consequences; or we might escape with the temporary derangement of our compasses, the disorganisation of our telegraphs, with electrical storms of unprecedented extent and violence, and startling exhibitions of aurora, &c. This is the *kind of danger*, if any there be, involved in a collision with a comet. The *chances* against such an occurrence are overpowering. As regards the comet of 1556 (Charles V.), so long as it retains the form of orbit which it possessed when last visible to us it can never approach near enough to the earth to justify alarm.

The probability of a collision (adds Mr. Hind) is equally remote, even if we extend the risk to comets generally. The chances are still as hundreds of millions to one that no such event takes place. M. Arago has remarked, that if we knew no more of a comet than that, at its minimum distance from the sun, it stood within the orbit of the earth, and had a diameter of one quarter that of our globe, the mathematical theory of probabilities shows that the odds would be 280,060,000 to 1 against its coming into contact with us.

Herr von Littrow, the German astronomer, says that the contact is, in the first place, highly improbable; and secondly, that even if such a catastrophe were to ensue, it would by no means cause the destruction of the world; for "it is irrefutably certain that the matter of which comets consist forms an extremely loose texture, that comets are in reality not coherent masses, but mere agglomerations of small corpuscles separated from one another by large interstices." The effect of a collision with such a body of vapour would barely equal that produced by thunderstorms and hurricanes.

THE DIVINING ROD

is more commonly employed to this day than is supposed. For the *modus operandi*, see *Things not generally Known*, p. 134.

From a paper by Mr. William Phillips, in Tilloch's *Philosophical Magazine*, vol. xiii. p. 309, it appears that the Divining

* The Comet of 1556; being Popular Replies to Every-day Questions, referring to its anticipated Reappearance. By J. Russell Hind. 1857.

Rod was ably advocated by De Thouvenel, in France, in the eighteenth century, and soon after in our own country by a philosopher of unimpeachable veracity, and a chemist, Mr. W. Cookworthy, of Plymouth. Pryce also informs us, p. 123 of his *Mineralogia Cornubiensis*, that many mines have been discovered by means of the rod, and quotes several; but after a long account of the mode of cutting, tying, and using it, interspersed with observations on the discriminating faculties of constitutions and persons in its use, he rejects it, because

“Cornwall is so plentifully stored with tin and copper lodes that some accident discovers to us every week a fresh vein,” and because “a grain of metal attracts the rod as strongly as a pound;” for which reason “it has been found to dip equally to a poor as to a rich lode.”—*Trans. Geol. Soc.* ii. 123.

Sir Thomas Browne describes the divining rod as “a forked hazel, commonly called *Moses's Rod*, which, held freely forth, will stir and play if any mine be under it.” But Browne thinks with Agricola that this rod is of pagan origin:

The ground whereof were the magical rods in poets,—that of Pallas in Homer, that of Mercury that charmed Argus, and that of Circe which transformed the followers of Ulysses. Too boldly usurping the name of Moses's rod; from which notwithstanding, and that of Aaron, were probably occasioned the fables of all the rest. For that of Moses must needs be famous unto the Egyptians, and that of Aaron unto many other nations, as being preserved in the ark until the destruction of the temple built by Solomon.—*Vulgar Errors*, book v. chap. 24.

There is a long story in the *Quarterly Review*, No. 44, showing a Lady Noel possessed the faculty of using the Divining Rod.

She took a thin forked hazel-twigg, about sixteen inches long, and held it by the end, the joint pointing downwards. When she came to the place where the water was under the ground, the twig immediately bent; and the motion was more or less rapid as she approached or withdrew from the spring. When just over it, *the twig turned so quick as to snap, breaking near the fingers*, which, by pressing it, were indented and heated, and *almost blistered*; a degree of agitation was also visible in her face. The exercise of the faculty is independent of any volition.

The Editor adds, that upon the narrator the most implicit confidence may be placed.

TALISMANIC KEYS.*

Keys, which can be traced to the Egypt of the Pharaohs,

* The Letter-lock, which has been patented as a novelty in our time, whereas it was known to the poets of the Elizabethan age.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's play of *The Noble Gentleman* these lines occur:

“A cap-case of your linen and your plate,
With a strange lock that opens with A M E N.”

And in the verses addressed to May, by Carew, in the *Comedy of the Heir*—

“As doth a lock
That goes with letters; for till every one be known
The lock's as fast as if you had found none.”

have from very early times been looked upon as possessing talismanic virtues, which are thus illustrated in a paper of interesting research read to the British Archæological Association by Mr. H. Syer Cuming, Hon. Sec., in 1856 :

The Chinese have their "hundred families' lock," which they suspend round the infant's neck to *lock* it to life. A miniature key is to this day found among the *charms* depending from the chatelaines of the fair ones of Germany and Italy, ay, and those even of our own land. The Bible and key have long been regarded as all-sufficient in discovering the perpetrator of a theft ; and few of us, perhaps, have escaped the infliction of a key being thrust down our back to stop hemorrhage from the nose : although a check to the bleeding is really effected by the shock produced by the coldness of the metal, the vulgar notion is that it acts as a charm.

A naturally perforated stone and a horn are frequently appended to the keys of outbuildings. The perforated flint, the *holy-stone* or *hag-stone*, is the talisman employed from the most remote period to guard the cattle from the attacks of the fiendish Mara, the ephialtes, or nightmare ; and the horn is the ensign and emblem of the god Pan, the protector of cattle, and hence regarded as a potent charm and fit appendage to the key of the stable and cowhouse. Strictly speaking, it ought to be the horn of a goat ; but in these degenerate days that of a cow or ram is at times employed.

Tell this to the groom or the cowboy, and they will laugh you to scorn, deride your information, and perchance pity your simplicity. They nevertheless, unknowingly, unthinkingly, perpetuate the most archaic superstitions ; and, though sunk in a slough of ignorance, thus become auxiliary in preserving and illustrating the thoughts, rites, and practices of departed ages.

DIVINATION BY BIBLE AND KEY.

The superstition glanced at above by Mr. Syer Cuming prevails in Asia, and is thought to have been originally derived from Syria. Eusèbe de Salle, in his *Pérégrinations en Orient*, vol. i., 1840, witnessed the custom at Antioch, in the house of the English consul, where it was enacted for the recovery of a missing jewel.

In Devonshire, many old persons, when they have lost any thing and suspect it to be stolen, take the fore-door key of their dwelling, and, in order to find out the thief, tie this key to the Bible, placing it very carefully on the 18th verse of the 50th psalm. Two persons must then hold the book by the bow of the key, and first repeat the name of the suspected thief and then the verse from the psalm. If the Bible moves, the suspected person is considered guilty ; if it does not move, innocent.

This superstition is also common in some parts of Surrey, where the Bible is opened at the 1st chapter of Ruth, and the key is laid upon the 16th verse ; in other counties it is placed over the 5th verse of the 18th chapter of Proverbs. The other working of the charm resembles the above. In Lancashire it

is employed in selecting a suitor, the choice and the detection being similarly determined. (See *Notes and Queries*, Nos. 26, 31, and 32.)

DISCOVERY OF A THIEF BY DIVINATION.

The finding of a thief by the sieve and shears, a superstition once greatly practised, is recorded in Dorset, in 1660, when one Cockeney having lost a gold ring, Edward Hill caused a sieve to turn round three times upon naming the party that was suspected to have the ring, and made use of a pair of shears in his discovery.

“This,” says Mr. Thomas Hearne, “is one of the most ancient modes of divination of which we have any record. It was practised among the early Greeks, and is mentioned by Theocritus, whose words, as translated by Creech, are :

To Agrio, too, I made the same demand ;
A cunning woman she, I crossed her hand.
She turned the sieve and shears, and told me true,
That I should love, and not be loved by you.

The Greeks used it, not only in questions of love, but for purposes similar to that which Master Cockeney had in view. Potter, in his *Antiquities of Greece*, says :

This Koskinomanteia was generally practised to discover thieves or others suspected of any crime, in this manner : “They tied a thread to the sieve, by which it was upheld, or else placed a pair of shears, which they held up by two fingers ; then prayed to the gods to direct and assist them : after that they repeated the names of the persons under suspicion, and he at whose name the sieve whirled round or moved was thought to have committed the fact.”

The old English practice was very similar. Grose tells us, that to discover a thief by the sieve and shears, you must stick the points of the shears in the wood of the sieve and let two persons support it balanced upright with their two fingers ; then read a certain chapter in the Bible, and afterwards ask St. Peter and St. Paul if A or B is the thief, naming all the persons you suspect. On naming the real thief, the sieve will suddenly turn round about. Hudibras speaks of this superstition as

The oracle of sieve and shoars,
That turns as certain as the spheres.

To this day it is customary in Lancashire to consult “a seer” in cases of lost property ; and the Rev. Mr. Christmas has been informed by persons whose veracity could not be questioned, that they had themselves done so with successful results.

DIVINATION CUP.

The Cup of Joseph, whereby he divined (*Genesis* xliv. 5),

was, according to all the Jewish accounts, one possessed of wonderful properties. There was, as far back as any records go, a tradition extant in the East touching a cup which passed into the hands of several mighty sovereigns, which represented the whole world in its concavity, and displayed all actions that were being or had been performed. It was called the Cup of Giamshid, and was said to have been discovered full of the elixir of immortality while digging to lay the foundations of Persepolis.

ROSE DIVINATION.

The gathering of a Rose on Midsummer Eve has been superstitiously associated with the choice of a husband or wife. In the *Connoisseur*, No. 50, we read : " Our maid Betty tells me that if I go backward without speaking a word into the garden upon Midsummer Eve, and gather a rose, and keep it in a clean sheet of paper without looking at it till Christmas Day, it will be as fresh as in June ; and if I then stick it in my bosom, he that is to be my husband will come and take it out." We have heard the condition stated, that the rose is to be gathered and sealed up in the paper while the clock is striking twelve at midday.

TABLE-TURNING.

In 1853 " this startling revelation of popular credulity " strangely occupied the public mind ; and its effect was without due inquiry referred to electricity, to magnetism, to attraction, to some unknown or hitherto unrecognised physical power to affect inanimate bodies ; to the revolution of the earth ; and even to diabolical or supernatural agency. The main experiment consisted of a certain number of persons placing the palms of their hands upon a table ; when in a few minutes it moved in various directions, according to the will of one of the party. Professor Faraday thus illustrates the fallacy of this result :

Those who assert that a heavy body can be raised from the ground and be attracted towards the hand without exerting any reacting force on the hand that lifts it, make an assertion directly opposed to the laws of gravitation, and they ought at least to have examined the phenomena before arriving at such a conclusion. If a heavy body like a table could thus be raised in opposition to gravitation, surely it might be expected that the same power would be able to disturb the equipoise of a balance ; but that it was unable to do. If such a power existed, which could attract without reaction, it would indeed be of the most important practical utility ; for we might conceive its extension to such a point that the touch of a hand would draw a railway-train without effort.

Professor Faraday, believing that the first cause assigned, namely, a quasi-involuntary muscular action (for the effect is with many subject to the wish or will), was the true cause, the

first point was to prevent the mind of the turner having an undue influence over the effects produced in relation to the nature of the substances employed.

For this purpose, he provided an apparatus with index attached : it consisted of two small flat pieces of wood held together by india-rubber springs, and separated by small rollers that allowed the pieces of wood to move freely over each other. The movement of the upper one was shown by an index, that pointed to the right or to the left according to the direction of the motion. This little apparatus, when placed under the hands of a practised table-turner, had the curious effect of paralysing his power when he looked at the index, and thus became conscious of the real movement of his hands ; but when the index was concealed from view, the table began to turn as briskly as if the apparatus did not intervene. This proved that the movement of the table was effected by the direct action of the muscles exerted involuntarily.

Again, Professor Faraday observes : "The most valuable effect of this test-apparatus is the corrective power it possesses over the mind of the table-turner. As soon as the index is placed before the most earnest, and they perceive—as in my presence they have always done—that it tells whether they are pressing downwards only or obliquely, then all effects of Table-turning cease, even though the parties persevere, earnestly desiring motion, till they become weary and worn out. No prompting or checking the hand is needed, *the power is gone* ; and this only because the parties are made conscious of what they are really doing mechanically, and so are unable unwittingly to deceive themselves."

Upon phenomena being attributed unhesitatingly to a supposed faculty possessed by animated beings of developing in inert bodies a peculiar kind of electricity, Arago remarks :

"What is apparently most extraordinary and most difficult to explain in the phenomenon of the tables," says the *savant*, "is the circumstance, that by means of, it may be said, infinitely small impulses impressed by the fingers on the mass of wood of which the table consists a very considerable degree of motion should at length be imparted to the table." Arago then quotes from the *Philosophical Transactions* Mr. Ellicot's experiments upon two pendulum-clocks, enclosed in separate cases, suspended from a wooden plank affixed to the same wall, and at a distance of $23\frac{1}{2}$ English inches from each other. "At first only one of these two clocks was going, the second clock was at rest ; after a certain time this second clock was found to have been set going by the imperceptible vibrations transmitted to its pendulum from the pendulum of the first clock through the medium of the intervening solid bodies. A very singular circumstance is, that after a certain time longer, while the pendulum of the second clock (the one which had first been at rest) vibrated in the largest arc which the construction of the clock would permit, the pendulum of the first clock, the one which at first was the only one going, had arrived at a state of entire rest." Arago's object was to show that there already existed in science instances of communicated motion analogous to those which have been recently presented by turning tables, and of which the explanation does not require any of those mysterious influences to which recourse has been had in the case of the tables.—*Meteorological Essays*.

"SORTES VIRGILIANÆ."

This name has been given to an instance of divination re-

lated of Welwood by King Charles I., who once tried this practice of determining doubtful matters by the opening of a book. The king being at Oxford during the Civil War, went one day to the public library, where he was shown, among other books, a Virgil, nobly printed and exquisitely bound. The Lord Falkland, to divert the king, would have his majesty make a trial of his fortune by the *Sortes Virgilianæ*; when the king, opening the book, came upon this part of Dido's imprecation against Æneas (translated by Dryden):

Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose.
Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
His men discourag'd and himself expell'd,
Let him for succour sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects and his son's embrace:
First let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain;
And when at length the cruel war shall cease,
On hard conditions may he buy his peace:
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command;
But fall untimely by some hostile band,
And lie unburied in the common sand.

The king seemed concerned at this accident; when Lord Falkland, observing it, would likewise try his own fortune in the same manner, hoping he might fall upon some passage that could have no relation to his case, and thereby divert the king's thoughts from any impression the other might have upon him. But the place that Falkland stumbled upon was yet more suited to his destiny than the other had been to the king's, being the following expressions of Evander upon the untimely death of his son Pallas, as translated by the same hand:

O Pallas, thou hast fail'd thy plighted word,
To fight with reason, not to tempt the sword!
I warn'd thee, but in vain; for well I knew
What perils youthful ardour would pursue;
That boiling blood would carry thee too far,
Young as thou wert in danger, raw to war.
O curst essay of arms, disastrous doom,
Prelude of bloody deeds and fights to come!

Aubrey, however, relates a different incident. In December 1648, when Charles I. was prisoner at Carisbrooke, the poet Cowley went to wait on him. "His highnesse asked him whether he would play at cards to divert his sad thoughts. Mr. Cowley replied that he did not care to play at cards; but if his highnesse pleased, they would use '*Sortes Virgilianæ*.' Mr. Cowley alwaies had a Virgil in his pocket. The prince accepted the proposal, and prickt his pinne in the fourth booke of the *Æneid*, at this place (iv. 615 et seq.).

“The prince understood not Latin well, and desired Mr. Cowley to translate the verses, which he did admirably well; and Mr. George Ent (who lived in his house at Chertsey in the Great Plague, 1665) showed me Mr. Cowley’s own handwriting :

By a bold people’s stubborn arms opprest,
Forced to forsake the land he once possess’t,
Torn from his dearest sonne, let him in vain
Seeke help, and see his friends unjustly slain.
Let him to base unequal termes submit,
In hope to save his crown ; yet loose both it
And life at once : untimely let him dy,
And on an open stage unburied ly.”

Aubrey, who had not at first recovered Cowley’s translation, having inserted an extract from Ogilby’s Virgil, observes on the last line of the passage he quoted,—

But die before his day, the sand his grave,—

“Now as to the last part, ‘the sand his grave,’ I well remember it was frequently and soberly affirmed by officers of the army and grandees, that the body of King Charles the First was privately putt into the sand about Whitehall; and the coffin, which was carried to Windsor and layd in King Henry 8th vault, was filled with rubbish or brick batts. Mr. Fabian Philips, who adventured his life before the king’s trial by printing, assures me that the king’s coffin did cost but six shillings—a plain deale coffin.”

Now although opinions differed at the time of Charles’s death as to the manner in which his body was disposed of, Sir Henry Halford’s account of what appeared on opening the coffin of Charles I. at Windsor on April 1, 1813, has set this question perfectly at rest.

CREDULITY AND SUPERSTITION.

Credulity, although it is nearly allied to Superstition, yet differs from it widely. Credulity is an unbounded belief in what is possible, although destitute of proof, and perhaps of probability; but superstition is a belief in what is wholly repugnant to the laws of the moral and physical world. Credulity is a far greater source of error than superstition; for the latter must be always more limited in its influence, and can exist only to a considerable extent in the most ignorant portions of society, whereas the former diffuses itself through the minds of all classes. by which the rank and dignity of science are degraded, its valuable labours confounded with the vain pretensions of empiricism, and ignorance is enabled to claim for itself the prescriptive right of delivering oracles amidst all the triumph of truth and the progress of philosophy. Credulity has been justly defined *belief without reason*; while scepticism,

its opposite, is *reason without belief*, and the natural and invariable consequence of credulity ; for it may be observed, that men who believe without reason are succeeded by others whom no reasoning can convince.—*Dr. Paris's Pharmacologia.*

POISON IN THE NAILS.

The idea that persons retain Poisons in their Nails is traced by Sir Henry Hallford, in a learned paper upon the Poisons of the Ancients, to the following statement as to the cause of the death of Alexander the Great.

Alexander is said to have been poisoned. The report is, that the poison was sent by Antiphon, and was of such a peculiar nature that no silver or metallic substance would contain it, and it was conveyed in the hoof of a mule. But the article was really onyx, as Horace says :

“*Nardi parvus onyx.*”

Now the word *onyx*, in Greek, signifies not only a stone, but *unguis*, a hoof or nail ; and the second sense had evidently been given instead of that of a precious stone. This double meaning of the term *onyx* Sir Henry Hallford considers to explain the error of poison being retained by persons in their nails.

AQUA TOFANA.

It was for a long time supposed that there actually did exist in Italy a secret poison, the effects of which were slow, and even unheeded, until a lingering malady consumed the sufferer. No suspicions were excited ; or, had they led to any post-mortem examination, no trace of the effects of the terrific preparation could have been detected. The class of persons who practised this wicked art were known under the name of “*Secret Poisoners* ;” they were believed to possess the power of destroying life at any stated period, from a few hours to a year ; and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were regarded in all the nations of Europe with extraordinary terror.

The most infamous of these poisoners was an Italian woman, named Tofana, who, about the middle of the seventeenth century, invented a poisonous fluid, called after her, *Aqua della Tofana*. Being detected in her wicked work, she was put to torture ; when she confessed having been instrumental to the death of no less than 600 persons ! Garelli, physician to Charles VI., writing to Hoffman on the subject, says :

Your elegant essay on the popular errors respecting poisons brought to my recollection a certain slow poison which that infamous poisoner, still alive in Naples, employed to the destruction of six hundred persons. It was nothing else than crystallised arsenic dissolved in water, with the addition, but for what purpose I know not, of the herb *Cymbalaria* (*antirrhinum*).

The dose of this poison was six drops ; yet, though it was in this state of concentration, its nature could not be detected, so little was that age acquainted with the art of chemical analysis ; whereas at the present time, even when arsenic has been dissolved in the stomach and mixed with vegetable and animal fluids, it may be reduced to its metallic form and made to exhibit all the physical properties of the metal to the *naked* eye, with as much distinctness as in any quantity, however large, *when only the twentieth part of a grain has been procured.* Modern chemistry has therefore deprived the poisoner of all chance of escape by concealing or disguising the poison administered.

By an old Scotch statute (James II. Parl. vii. cap. 30), it was made high treason to bring any poison into the kingdom ; which law, Barrington conjectures, was chiefly intended to provide against the importation of poisons from Italy, where assassination and this kind of murder have but too much prevailed. “I have been informed,” he adds, “that it is not uncommon in Italy to say, upon a man’s expressing himself with regard to another from whom he hath received an injury, *I wish he would but drink a cup of chocolate with me :*”

“An Italian’s revenge may pause, but’s ne’er forgot.”

Fletcher’s *Fair Maid of the Inn.*

The ingenious author of the *Memoirs of Petrarch*, however, supposes that this prejudice against the Italians arose from two or three supposed murders of this description at Avignon during the residence of the French popes at that place.

CHARACTER OF THE SUPERSTITIOUS.

The pious and learned Bishop Hall (who was the friend of Sir Thomas Browne) has left us the following pictures-in-little of the superstitions of their times, in the bishop’s *Characters of Vices :*

Superstition is godless religion, devout impiety. The superstitious is fond in observation, servile in fear : he worships God but as he lists ; he gives God what he asks not ; more than he asks, and all but what he should give ; and makes more sins than the ten commandments. This man dares not stir forth till his breast be crossed and his face sprinkled. If but a hare cross him in the way, he returns ; or if his journey began unawares on a dismal day, or if he stumbled at the threshold. If he see a snake unkilld, he fears a mischief ; if the salt fall towards him, he looks pale and red, and is not quiet till one of the waiters have poured wine on his lap ; and when he sneezeth, thinks him not his friend that uncovers not. In the morning he listens whether the crow crieth even or odd ; and by that token presages of the weather. If he hear but a raven croak from the next roof, he makes his will ; or if a bittour fly over his head by night : but if his troubled fancy shall second his thoughts with the dream of a fair garden, or green rushes, or the salutation of a dead friend, he takes leave of the world, and says he can-

not live. He will never set to sea but on a Sunday; neither ever goes without an *erra pater* in his pocket. St. Paul's day, and St. Swithin's, with the twelve, are his oracles, which he dares believe against the almanac. When he lies sick on his death-bed, no sin troubles him so much as that he did once eat flesh on a Friday; no repentance can expiate that: the rest need none. There is no dream of his without an interpretation, without a prediction; and if the event answer not his exposition, he expounds it according to the event. Every dark grove and pictured wall strikes him with an awful, but carnal devotion. Old wives and stars are his counsellors; his night-spell is his guard, and charms his physicians. He wears Paracelsian characters for the toothache; and a little hallowed wax is an antidote for all evils. This man is strangely credulous, and calls impossible things miraculous; if he hear that some sacred block speaks, moves, weeps, smiles, his bare feet carry him thither with an offering; and if a danger miss him in the way, his saint hath the thanks. Some ways he will not go, and some he dares not; either there are bogs, or he feigneth them; every lantern is a ghost, and every noise is of chains. He knows not why, but his custom is to go a little about, and to leave the cross still on the right hand. One event is enough to make a rule: out of these rules he concludes fashions proper to himself; and nothing can turn him out of his own course. If he have done his task, he is safe; it matters not with what affection. Finally, if God would let him be the carver of his own obedience, he could not have a better subject: as he is, he cannot have a worse."

SUPERSTITIONS OF CHILDHOOD.

An old writer says: "Superstition is the greatest burden in the world;" of the truth of which remark many persons are sensible from their earliest childhood. Indeed, superstition is the bugbear of the nursery; whereas the great aim should be to divert children of this pernicious fear. "If too great excitability and power of imagination be observed in childhood, much may be done by a sound discipline to restrain it. Let the child be protected from the sheeted spectres of servants, and the boy from the schidonis and rattling curtains and palls of romance-writers. Let his first ideas of the Almighty be those of a God of Mercy, who gives him every blessing—who offers himself to childhood under the most benign of characters, as taking little children in his arms, and putting his hands upon them and blessing them. Let him be taught to 'see God in storms and hear him in the wind,' not as the poor Indian, but by having his mind tutored to trace the regular course of God's providence in the most striking phenomena of natural science; and we see no objection, and little difficulty, in explaining to him so much of the metaphysics as may enable him to unravel the associations of darkness and the churchyard."—*Quart. Review*.

THE PASSION FLOWER.

The genus *Passiflora* is named from a fancied resemblance between the parts of the flower and the emblems of our Saviour's crucifixion. In the five anthers, the Spanish monk saw

his wounds ; in the triple style, the three nails by which he was fixed to the cross ; and in the column on which the ovary is elevated, the pillar to which he was bound ; a number of fleshy threads which spread from a cup within the flower being finally likened to the crown of thorns. "There are cuts," says Sir James E. Smith, "to be found in some old books, apparently drawn from description, like the hog in armour or our signs to represent the rhinoceros, in which the flower is made up of the very things themselves."

In reality the flower of *Passiflora* consists of a calyx and corolla, each of five divisions, consolidated into a cup, from within the rim of which spread several rows of filamentous processes, by some regarded as barren stamens ; within these, from the sides of the cup, there proceed one or more elevated rings, notched or undivided, evidently of the same nature as the filamentous processes themselves. In the centre of the flower stands a column, or gynophore, with the sides of which five stamens are united ; but spreading freely from it beyond its apex, and bearing five oblong horizontal anthers. At the apex of the column is the ovary, a one-celled case with three parietal polyspermous placentæ, and bearing three club-shaped styles at its vertex.

HARE AND FOX OMENS.

Sir Thomas Browne says :

If a Hare cross the highway, there are few above threescore years that are not perplexed thereat ; which notwithstanding is but an augurial terror, according to that received expression, *Inauspicatum dat iter oblatus lepus*. And the ground of the conceit was probably no greater than this, that a fearful animal passing by us portended unto us something to be feared : as, upon the like consideration, the meeting of a Fox presaged some future imposture ; which was a superstitious observance prohibited under the Jews, as is expressed in the idolatry of Maimonides, and is referred unto the sin of an observer of fortunes, or one that abuseth events unto good or bad signs, forbidden by the law of Moses ; which notwithstanding sometimes succeeding, according to feares or desires, have left impressions and timorous expectations in credulous minds for ever."—*Vulgar Errors*, book v. chap. 23.

Upon this, Dr. Wren naively notes :

"When a hare crosseth us, wee thinke itt ill lucke shee should soe neerely escape us, and we had not a dog as neere to catch her."

The hare was not formerly prized in Britain ; Cæsar tells us that the flesh of hare was not eaten in his time by the Britons. Yet the Romans held it in high estimation. Alexander Severus had a hare daily served at his table.

CUCKOO OMENS.

Wilkin, in his excellent edition of *Sir Thomas Browne's Works*, observes that the Cuckoo is not honoured by him with a place among Birds of Omen, and supplies these notes :

"Plinie writeth, that if, when you first hear the cuckoo, you mark well where your right foot standeth, and take up that earth, the *fleas* will by no means breed, either in your house or chamber, where any of

the same earth is thrown or scattered." (*Hill's Natural and Artificial Conclusions*, 1650.) In the North, and perhaps all over England, it is vulgarly accounted an unlucky omen if you have no money in your pocket when you hear the cuckoo for the first time in a season.—*Queen Bee*, ii. 20.

It is a still more common popular divination, for those who are unmarried to count the number of years yet allotted to them of single blessedness by the number of the cuckoo's notes which they count when first they hear it in the spring.

DEATH BY ENCHANTMENTS.

King Edward VI. (says Aubrey) was killed by witchcraft, by figures of wax: see the Chronicles. And the late Duke of Buckingham's mother was killed in Ireland by a figure made with haire, by her second husband's (Lord Ancram) brother's nurse, who bewitched her to death because her foster-child (second brother) should inherit the estate. And one Hammond, of Westminster, was hanged, or tryed for his life, about 1641, for killing * * * by a figure of wax.

Though there is little authority for Aubrey's assertion that the death of Edward VI. had been compassed "by witchcraft by figures of wax," and though his supposed union of the Duke of Buckingham's mother with Lord Ancram is so great a blunder that it is not easy to guess its origin; yet the practice of attempting to destroy the lives of individuals by such a process was formerly exceedingly common, so much so, indeed, that Dobenek, in his *Volksglauben des Deutschen Mittelalters*, ii. 20-28, devotes a chapter to this peculiar subject.

Shakspeare has perpetuated, in the second part of *Henry VI.*, the charge brought against Eleanor Cobham the Duchess, of conspiring

"With Margery Jourdain the cunning witch,
And Roger Bolingbroke the conjuror,"

that they should, to use the words of Fayban, "devise an image of wax like unto the king; the which image they dealt so with, that by their devilish incantations and sorcery they intended to bring out of life, little and little, the king's person, as they little and little consumed that image." Our history affords also many other instances of such attempts; but the most recent which we have met occurs in Camerarius' *Dissertationes Physico-Medicæ*, 8vo, Tubingen, 1712, where we have an account of the endeavour of a prisoner at Turin to procure the death of the prince then reigning by stabbing a waxen image, after he had made use of several superstitious ceremonies and also of a consecrated host.—*Anecdotes and Traditions, Camden Society's Papers*.

BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT.

"The superstition of Witchcraft," says Dr. Herbert Mayo, in his volume *On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions*, "stretches back into remote antiquity, and has many roots. In Europe it is partly of Druidical origin. The Druidesses were part priestesses, part shrewd old ladies who dealt in magic and medicine. They were called *albrune*, 'all-knowing.' The main source from which we derived this superstition is the East,

and traditions and facts incorporated in our religion. There were only wanted the ferment of thought of the fifteenth century, the energy, ignorance, enthusiasm, and faith of those days, and the papal denunciation of witchcraft by the Bull of Innocent VIII. in 1459, to give fury to the delusion. And from this time, for three centuries, the flames at which more than a hundred thousand victims perished cast a lurid light over Europe.

“Still there is no marvel in the absolute belief of the people in witchcraft only two centuries ago: what could they do but believe, when the witches and sorcerers themselves, before their execution, avowed their guilt, and told how they had laid themselves out to league with the evil spirit; how they had gone through a regular process in the black art; how they had been rebaptised with the support of regular witch-sponsors?” &c.

The following are a few of the details of the *modus operandi* of the delusion:

How a person became a reputed Witch.—It was believed, and that universally, that a malevolent spirit took possession of some human being; and through this agent worked out cruel, wicked, and devilish purposes. Oddly enough, this bad spirit chose for his abode a female advanced in years, and by choice one upon whom age had exerted its greatest power. The old and ugly woman was believed to have the power of destroying health, causing dreadful and incurable disease, inducing misfortune in the most uncommon way, and blighting the most flourishing crops by a glance of her evil eye. The old woman was not a simply passive object, without help or means of rescue, but was considered to be a willing, wicked partner in the diabolical acts, and in no sense the pitiful victim of stern necessity and spiritual superiority. Juries of burgesses investigated the matter; and an entry made at Lyme, in 1569, shows that they admitted a merchant's widow, the party interested, to give evidence as to the witch that had dealt harm to her in the manner following:

Item, we do find that Johan Ellesdon, widow, upon her othe, hath declared before us that Ellen Walker is a wytche, and that she will approve; and also that James Lugebase, upon his othe, hath declared before us that the said Ellen Walker did saie unto the saide Johane Elsdon that she could witche her no more.

Bishop Jewell, in a sermon before Queen Elizabeth, in 1598, thus testifies to the increase of witchcraft in his time:

“It may please your grace to understand that witches and sorcerers, within the last four years, are marvellously increased within your grace's realm. Your grace's subjects pine away even unto the death; their colour fadeth—their flesh rotteth—their speech is benumbed—their senses are bereft! I pray God they may never practise further than upon the *subject*!”

For a woman to be old and ugly was, in these times, to live in positive danger. Any one might expose her life to imminent peril upon the idlest imputation. We know what

numbers perished at the gallows up to 1682, when three poor women from Bideford were sentenced to death at Exeter assize for "bewitching several persons, destroying ships at sea and cattle by land."

Whenever any remarkable disaster befel a member of a family, no difficulty was generally felt in ascribing it to some old person. Epilepsy was universally treated as proceeding from witchcraft. Neighbouring gossips assembled; they pitied the patient, and railed at the wicked author of so much suffering. The patient heard what passed, and adopted all the charges and suggestions of the assembled gossips.

Dame Grimmerton, who was sent to gaol in 1687 to be tried as a witch, is stated to have *appeared* to one of her victims upon the middle beam of the chamber-window, clothed with a long-crowned hat, a long red whittle, a red coat, a green apron, and a white cloak about her neck under her whittle; and afterwards go out at the upper part of the window. When the witch *appeared*, the pains of the bewitched were increased; but imprisonment took from her all power.

Where there was a doubt in the evidence against a witch, the witch-finder or witch-prover was called in: he went round in some parts, and sad horrors followed his visit to a town. The authorities countenanced the impostor, whose arrival in the town was commonly announced by the bellman.

Among other precautions, a piece of bacon stuck with pins used to be suspended in chimneys to interrupt witches in their descent, and so avert their visit. Toads that gained access to a cellar or house, were ejected with the greatest care; and no injury was offered, because these were regarded, from being used as *familiars* by witches, with veneration or awe. We have selected and abridged these evidences from Roberts's *Social Life of the Southern Coast*.

At Wingrave, in Buckinghamshire, so lately as the year 1759, a case occurred of the popular witchcraft trial of weighing against the church Bible. An old woman was accused by a neighbour of bewitching her spinning-wheel, so that she could not make it go round either one way or the other; when, being tried by the church Bible and put into the opposite scale, to the no small astonishment and mortification of her accuser, she actually outweighed the Bible, and was honourably acquitted of the charge.

Baretti, the Italian lexicographer, journeyed from London to Exeter in a six-inside coach, in four days, in 1760; when he records seeing the ducking-stool over the water by Honiton, where they dipped old women suspected of being witches. There, if they sank, their fate was decided; if they swam, they were supposed to have been clearly proved witches.

Witchcraft (says the Rev. W. Christmas), as vulgarly understood, is perhaps the most absurd system that the mind of man ever devised for belief: it supposed that those who were quite unable to live in comfort themselves, have yet the power of enriching or impoverishing others; that those who tottered with age and languished with disease, were yet capable of bestowing health and taking it away; and that those who had not the power to obtain one earthly attendant, could command the spirits of the air and of hell. It supposed likewise that its professors had sold their souls to the powers of evil, without receiving either wealth, pleasure, youth, beauty, rank, or estimation, in return; and that a few years of a gloomy existence, gifted with powers as gloomy, were purchased by an eternity of torment. These circumstances have been frequently noticed, but never explained; and though stress has been laid on the prohibition in the Mosaic law, surely that law might be supposed with propriety directed against pretenders: besides which, the word employed in the original signifies poisoners, and would probably never have been rendered *witches* had not witchcraft been so much in fashion during the middle centuries.

Witches were supposed to be rendered powerless by passing a running stream, by stepping over straws* so as to form the sign of the cross; by nailing a horseshoe to a door, they could not cross that threshold. By cutting their foreheads into a cross, they lost their power for a while; there were also many other means of defence, equally cruel and equally ridiculous, which were put into exercise against them.—*Selected from the Cradle of the Twin Giants*, vol. ii.

Among many reported defensatives from witchcraft was the elder, which, according to Grose, was believed to possess the virtue of protecting persons bearing a branch of it from the charms of witches and wizards. This popular superstition is the probable reason why so many of these trees are planted by the sides of our rural cottages. Again, the course of a witch might be arrested:

Straws across my path retard;

The horseshoe's nail'd, each threshold's guard.

The old Woman and her Cats, by Gay.

The pretended *witchfinder* was as gross an abuse as the belief in witchcraft. That vile impostor, Matthew Hopkins, learned his trade, as he affected, from experiment; and travelling through Essex, Sussex, Norfolk, and Huntingdon, he pretended to discover witches, superintending their examination by the most unheard-of tortures, and compelling forlorn and miserable creatures to admit and confess matters equally absurd and impossible; the admission of which was the forfeiture of their lives. At length, the popular indignation was so strongly excited against Hopkins, that some country gentlemen seized on him, and put him to his own favourite experiment of swimming; on which, as he happened to float, he stood convicted of witchcraft, and so the country was rid of him:

* "Straws dissolve enchantments," was in the *Havamaal*, or the *Divine Discourse of Odin*, who gave these precepts of wisdom to mankind. Hence, probably, is derived the custom of laying two straws crosswise in the path where a witch is expected to come.—*Mallett's Northern Antiquities*.

Has not this present parliament
 A ledger to the devil sent,
 Fully empower'd to treat about
 Finding revolted witches out?
 And has he not, within a year,
 Hang'd threescore of 'em in one shire?
 Some only for not being drown'd,
 And some for sitting on the ground
 Whole days and nights upon their breeches,
 Not feeling pain, were hung for witches;
 And some for putting knavish tricks
 Upon green geese and turkey-chicks,
 Or pigs, that suddenly deceast,
 Of griefs unnat'ral, as he guest:
 Who after prov'd himself a witch,
 And made a rod for his own back.

Hudibras, part ii. canto 3.

"The belief in Witchcraft," says a correspondent to *The Times*, April 3, 1857, "is very general among the poor, and not uncommon in a class above them. Mere ability to read and write does not counteract it." The writer then gives the particulars of an application made to him as a magistrate, in November 1856, for an order to have a witch "proved." The believers in this case were very fairly educated, in a manner; but they still received with unreasoning credulity the old wives' fables handed down "from generation to generation," and kept alive no doubt, in each actual instance, by knaves making their harvest of fools. The applicant above stated cited as a precedent the following *Swimming of a Witch*:

"I don't know, sir, whether we've one on 'em in this parish now (though old Mrs. L——, who died last year, she bore a very moderate character, and when Mr. P——, the farmer, offended her once, he had a colt went very awkward afterwards). But old Mrs. Pointer—when I wuz a boy—she wuz a real witch! Har they swum. A long ladder was put across the river, and old Mr. Loveday stood on it, pushing her under water; but 'twas no use—up she come every time. Then they pulled her out, and began to mob her. Then she called out to be weighed against the church-book; but the churchwarden swore with a great oath that she should not come near the Bible, and told her 'to go home, for an infernal old witch as she was.' And so she was, sir. They used to see har little things crawling about near the clock."

"What little things?"

"Har imps they called 'em."

"I want to know what an imp is like?"

"I never see one, sir; I was only a boy. But I've heard they was like little meece (mice)."

So here is a rural witch complete.

In Scotland the belief in witchcraft is very general. In every parish there is one or more persons who are known as witch-doctors, although their services are only called for by stealth. At all the seaport towns the fishermen are found to be highly superstitious. The horseshoe is very commonly nailed to the stern or sternpost of the boat; and no fisherman will use a boat again which had been upset and the crew

drowned. In some of the cities there are many fortune-tellers ; and in one case a lady of rank was known to consult a miserable old hag as to a family difficulty, while her footman waited for her at the door.— See “ Witchcraft Laws in England,” in *Curiosities of History*, p. 205.

“ GOLDEN RULES FOR DISCRIMINATING TRUTH IN HUMAN INQUIRIES.”

Sir Richard Phillips, the Editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, and the projector of many educational works which to this day are extensively used in schools, has left the following “ Golden Rules” for the detection of popular superstition :*

The radical errors of savages consist in mistaking causes : in considering dreams as inspirations ; in considering medicines as charms, and charms as medicines ; in considering their personal good as the special act of some kind genius, and their personal evils as the act of some malevolent genius ; in yielding their judgments to such hasty faith, and in implanting such faith in their children ; till, by accumulation and acceleration, the whole becomes a system, and an integral part of the minds of themselves and their successors.

These errors do not consist of one practice more than another : as whether a reptile is adored as the fetisch of a nation ; or a monstrous idol as its protector ; or an unsculptured god clothed with human sentiments, caprices, and passions ; or whether stars, or gods and goddesses, or luck and ill-luck, or fate and destiny, or charms and miracles, or incantations and invocations : the principle of erroneous superstition is the same whenever a cause of a material effect is assumed which is not material, connected, commensurate, and mechanical.

A dream has no mechanical connection with the things of which it is the alleged sign ; a charm has no mechanical connection with the things over which it is assumed to have power. African fetishes, or oriental idols, have no mechanical connection with the things which they are said to influence ; witchery or enchantment, the planets, the entrails of animals, sacred omens, chemical action, and sediments of tea-cups, have no mechanical energy, or commensurate connection with their pretended effects ; and therefore are superstitious absurdities.

All doctrines of causation are absurd and superstitious when there is no possible or mechanical connection between the cause assumed and the effect produced.

Thus it is absurd and superstitious to assert that a rod or wand can by its touch transform one substance into another, because there is no operation on the substance by such means by which it can be so converted.

It is absurd and superstitious to allege that there are lucky seats in gaming, because there is no connection between the seats and the accidents of the cards or dice.

It is absurd and superstitious to ascribe the power of foretelling to dreams, or planets, or sediments of tea-cups, or entrails of animals, because there is no connection between the same and the events with which they are said to be coincident.

* From Golden Rules of Social Philosophy ; or, a New System of Practical Ethics. By Sir Richard Phillips. Printed for the Author. 1828.

It is absurd and superstitious to ascribe cures to touching, or diseases to witchcraft, because the substance in either case is changed by the touch of the healer or the witch.

It is absurd and superstitious to believe in the appearance or noises of ghosts and pretended spirits of the dead ; for nothing but what is material can be an object of sense, or can act so as to affect light or sound : all such appearances, as matter of fact, must therefore be referred to illusions of the mind, or to disordered or mistaken affections of the sense, assisted by implicit faith in the possibility of the phantom.

It is absurd and superstitious to attach any luck or ill-luck to days of the month ; for days are but similar revolutions of the earth in circles of space, which never return to the same point, and which are perfectly indifferent to actions of men and the contingency of their unconnected fortunes.

It is absurd and superstitious to consider events unconnected as signs or omens of each other's occurring, or to consider events as governed by any coincidences with other events, when there is no mechanical connection, as cause and effect, and often no connection either in kind or species.

CORPSE CANDLES.

The superstition is current to this day in Wales, that certain lights, called "Corpse Candles," veer towards the churchyard, which they enter, and there hover round the spot where the person whose death they intimate will be buried, and then disappear. They vary in brilliancy and size, according to the person whose doom it is to leave the world : thus an infant's would not be larger than the flame of a common candle, whilst a man's would be proportionally larger. The colour is described as of sulphurous blue or red ; and when any one observes the lights approach, if he does not move aside, he will be struck down by their force. If they are seen to stop, the corpse will do the same at the funeral ; if they move aside, it will so occur at the burial ; and should two candles meet, the two funerals will do the same. It is also said, that if a person looks back at a light after it has passed him, he will perceive the corpse and its attendants.

We quote the above from a volume of *Cambrian Superstitions*, published in 1831, the author of which observes : "These lights must not be confounded with the Will-o'-the-wisp." He attributes their appearance to "a bishop of St. David's, a martyr, who in olden days, whilst burning at the stake, prayed that he might be seen in Wales (some say in his diocese only) before a person's death, that he might testify he had died a martyr ; and in many parts of North Wales the people are almost distracted when they see them, or it is not known whose death they predict."

We suspect, however, that the corpse candles take their rise from the same source as Will-o'-the-wisp, namely, phosphuretted hydrogen gas. See p. 157.

SOOTHSAYERS.

English history abounds in instances of the effect produced by the denunciation of the soothsayer. Henry of Richmond unfurled his banner in accomplishment of the saw of the soothsayer, who had long declared that the dun cow would prosper in England. Changes in the royal dynasty were anticipated as long foretold, and the rude and awful rhyme assisted to feed the fury of civil war. Devices and tokens, signs and bearings, were introduced so as to blend allegory with heraldry :

When the Bear is muzzled and cannot byte,
And the Horse is fettered and cannot stryke,
And the Swanne is sicke and cannot swynme,
Then shall the splayfoot England winne.

INTERCALARY DAYS.

The Mexicans were addicted to astrology ; and a curious coincidence existed between them and the ancient Egyptians with regard to the Intercalary Days. Children born on any of those five days were considered unfortunate ; they had no guardian spirit, and were called *nemoquichtle*, or unhappy, in order that these very names might bring to their remembrance how little they should trust to their stars.—*Humboldt's Researches*, vol. i. p. 287.

THE SHRINE OF LORETTO.

Loretto, or Loreto, a small town in the Papal States, has been well styled “the Mecca of Italy,” with such veneration has it been regarded by the followers of the Roman Catholic religion. Here is the *Santa Casa*, or “Holy House ;” a little ugly building, which the Romanists assert to have been in former ages the veritable dwelling of the Virgin Mary. The legend relates, that in the year 1291 the house of the Virgin at Nazareth, which had been converted into a chapel, was carried off by angels through the air, and deposited near Tersato in Dalmatia ; that three years afterwards it was transported by the same angels, in the same miraculous manner, across the Adriatic to the coast of Italy, and planted at a thousand paces distance from the sea, in the neighbourhood of Recanati ; that eight months afterwards it fixed itself 1000 paces nearer the town ; and finally took up its station on the lands of a noble lady called Lauretta, and there gave rise to the present city of Loretto. Kings and nobles, rich and poor, have alike testified their admiration of this supposed relic in rich and costly presents. The *Santa Casa* soon became encased with marble ; and for further protection a spacious church was erected over it. Externally the holy house, or shrine (which many imagine to be without foun-

dation and resting on the ground), is polished with kisses and blackened with the smoke of many lamps. It has a vaulted roof, admitted to be modern; its marble sides and ends are decorated with Corinthian columns and rich ornaments by Bramante, bas-reliefs of the history of the Virgin, statues of the sibyls and prophets; and in the eastern wall, in a niche once fenced-in with solid gold, is the cedar image of the Virgin, in a dress glittering with precious stones. To this shrine the Romanists still repair in considerable numbers; before the Reformation, upwards of 200,000 worshippers visited it in each year, bringing priceless presents. In the house itself were twenty-two lamps of gold, and two gold crowns set with diamonds, presented in fulfilment of a vow by Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII., when she gave birth to Louis XIV., after having been twenty-two years without children. The last great offering was made by the Queen Dowager of Poland, and cost her 18,000 crowns. Of these treasures, however, the "Holy House" was plundered after the French Revolution of the last century; and the present treasure is comparatively trifling.

DOGMATISTS, EMPIRICS, AND ECLECTICS.

The *Dogmatists* were a sect of physicians among the ancients, who professed to be regulated in their practice by proper reasoning from facts previously discovered respecting the causes of disease, the action of remedies, and the structure and functions of the living body. The dogmatist whose writings have outlived those of all his sect, and whose name will ever be held in deserved veneration, is Hippocrates, the father of physic. The dogmatists were analogous to the regular physicians of modern times; and like them they had formidable antagonists and rivals in the *Empirics*, who despised their principles, theories, and discussions, and maintained that the practice of physic should be guided by experience alone. The term 'empiric' is now applied to those who practise physic without a competent education or knowledge of their profession, and who pretend to wonderful cures by the use of some nostrums which they sell for their own advantage. The *Eclectics* were a class of ancient physicians, who refused to acknowledge the exclusive authority of any masters in the practice of physic, and selected alike from dogmatists and empirics whatever knowledge they thought consonant to truth, and whatever practice they thought would be beneficial to their patients. In modern times, the illustrious Boerhaave was long thought the model of a genuine eclectic.

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS.

"One of the causes of the Persecution of the Jews arose from a notion that they killed the children of Christians, in

order to use their blood in medicine. Gower (in his second book *De Confessione Amantis*) states it to have been prescribed to Constantine for the cure of his leprosy ; but that he refused to try the medicine, and for that piety was miraculously healed :

‘The would him bathe in childe bloode,
Within seven winters’ age ;
For as thei sayen, that shulde assuage
The lepre.’

F. 45. B.

“ A notion still (1769) prevails in Austria, that when a criminal is beheaded, the blood, drank immediately that it springs from the neck, is a certain cure for the falling sickness. Brown, who mentions this, was an eye-witness to its being received in a jug for the above purpose.”—*Travels*, p. 155 ; quoted by Barrington in his *Observations on the more Ancient Statutes*.

The Jews have likewise been charged with using human blood as an ingredient of the food compounded for the Passover festival. This abominable charge was revived in the year 1840, and gave rise to the disgraceful persecution of certain Jews at Damascus ; but, for the honour of humanity, the atrocious accusation has been satisfactorily refuted, and proved altogether groundless. Mr. Salomons, who has written a small volume upon this painful subject, argues that

“ The strict injunction against the use of blood in food is ever regarded as one of the highest importance by those who adhere to the principles of the Jewish religion. Were it possible to imagine for a moment that the Jew could be so lost to every feeling of nature as to engage in a murder for the attainment of any ordinary purpose whatever, it may be safely asserted that, dependent as the Jews are entirely on their religious teachers, it would be an entire violation of all their principles to interfere in any matter connected with religious objects without the express direction of their rabbinical authorities. The remark, therefore, lightly made, that superstitious fanatical Jews may, in a spirit of Eastern bigotry, do what other persons of the same faith, but not imbued with the same sentiments, would hesitate to commit, is quite fallacious. A total ignorance of the nature and structure of the Jewish religion is exhibited by those who make this observation. The Jew receives from his priest or rabbi the exposition of the principles which should regulate his moral and religious conduct. The rabbi himself has no authority, except to administer the law as it is written ; he has no power to make any change either in the oral or traditional law ; neither can he introduce any new construction by which the defined rule of religious conformity may be undermined.

Since, therefore, the use of blood is prohibited by the law, all the care of the rabbi has been directed to prevent by minute restrictions the possible intrusion of the smallest particle of blood into any kind or description of food ; and this practice prevails wherever the Jewish code is in operation. The ecclesiastical precautions always adopted to insure the purity of the Passover diet, and that it should be composed of the best and simplest materials, are conducted with the severest scrutiny, in obedience to a written code, and are extremely minute and rigorous. The Passover food consists of a mixture of the finest flour with the purest water, to form biscuit, or unleavened bread ; and it is

eaten in reference to the Divine command to observe the Passover, in commemoration of the deliverance from the land of Egypt (*Exodus*, chap. xii. 15).”*

The antipathy of the Jews to pork is thus noticed by Sir Thomas Browne: “The Jews abstained at first from swine symbolically, as an emblem of impurity, and not for fear of leprosie, as Tacitus would put upon them.”—*Vulgar Errors*, b. iii. c. xxv. p. 192.

MORMONISM.

This monstrous delusion of the middle of the nineteenth century is, thus vividly pictured by Professor Forbes: “The age is lost in wonder at the migrating stream of gold-seekers pouring in upon the El Dorados of California and Australia. A far more astonishing phenomenon is the emigration of thousands to the new holy land of Utah, seeking for a terrestrial paradise amid the wilds of Deseret, and a New Jerusalem in the city of the Great Salt Lake. Ships sail from Liverpool laden with ‘Latter-day Saints,’ firm believers in the divine mission of Joe Smith, the literal inspiration of the Book of Mormon, the ‘hopeless corruption’ of the Holy Bible, and the prophetic authority of Governor Brigham Young. Comfortable farmers, even small and unembarrassed proprietors, quit the homes of their ancestors and the scenes of their childhood, renounce an allegiance to the government under which they have safely and happily lived, and communion with the Church of their fathers, to brave perils by sea and land for the sake of one of the grossest impostures and most transparent shams that ever deluded human credulity. Wonderful indeed must be the spell that can annihilate in the hearts of good homely men and women, not only all the elements of the Christian faith, about which they had never been taught to doubt, but even the ties, almost as sacred, by which their family life had hitherto been regulated. The converts to Mormonism—to a barbarous and bigoted false religion, to utter uncharitableness, and to polygamy—are not to be found among scoffers and sceptics, reprobates and godless vagabonds, but among pious and well-conducted families, people against whom there is no slur, and frequenters of prayer-meetings. There must be something grievously wrong in the intellectual condition of the community amidst whom this strange form of fanaticism can take root. There needs no long search to discover the source of the evil,—in the want of enlightened education we can too plainly discern the cause.”

* An Account of the Recent Persecutions of the Jews at Damascus. By D. Salomons, Esq., 1840; elected an Alderman of the City of London in 1847, and Lord Mayor in 1855.

Laws and Customs.

VASSAL AND VILLAIN.

Nothing proves more strongly the detestation in which the people of this country held the feudal oppressions than that the word *Vassal*, which once signified a feudal tenant, or grantee of land, is now synonymous to slave; and that the word *Villain*, which once meant only an innocent, inoffensive bondman, has kept its relative distance, and denotes a person destitute of every moral and honourable principle, and is become one of the most opprobrious terms in the English language. — *Christian's Notes to Blackstone's Commentaries.*

THE TITLE OF MAJESTY.

It is a common Error to suppose Charles V. to have been the originator of this sovereign title. Its earliest use was to denote the dignity of the Roman people. Thence the emperors borrowed it, as the representatives of the people, in accordance with the *Lex Regia*. They were called "*Majestas Augusta*," and even "*Regia Majestas*." In later times, this title was applied to the emperor Louis the Pious; and Charles the Bald assumes it in one of his charters. It is also found attributed to some of the popes. Charles V. at most gave it fixity and continuance, instead of its being adopted and discontinued by turns.

ABDICATION OF SOVEREIGNS.

This means a voluntary resignation of the sovereignty on the part of the holder. When this is performed in favour of another, it becomes an *act of cession*; and when rendered compulsory, it is no longer an abdication. Thus many writers have confounded these terms.

In modern times, the abdication of Christina queen of Sweden is perhaps the most memorable. The emperor Charles V. merely resigned in favour of Philip. James II. of England *deserted* the throne, and it was then declared vacant; while Napoleon abdicated twice upon compulsion, and his successors, Charles X. and Louis Philippe, both formally abdicated when power had been torn from their grasp.

Charles Albert king of Sardinia, after the battle of Novaro,

fought on the 24th of March 1849, resigned his crown in favour of Victor Emmanuel, and retired to Oporto, where he soon after died. On the 2d of December, in the previous year, Ferdinand emperor of Austria abdicated in favour of his nephew Francis Joseph.—*English Cyclopædia*.

THE ORDER OF THE GARTER.

Every schoolboy has read of the symbolical origin of the decoration which gave a name to the Order of the Garter, assigning it to the accidental fall of a lady's garter (the queen's, or a Countess of Salisbury's) at a grand festival; and the motto, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," to the gallant indignation of the monarch at the sneer of his courtiers. This popular tradition has been rejected as erroneous by most writers of credit. Sir E. Ashmole, in his history of the order, considers the garter as a symbol of union; and in this opinion he is followed by Sir Walter Scott and Sir Samuel Meyrick.* The above origin is not, however, entirely given up as a fable; for, to use the words of Hume, "although frivolous, it is not unsuitable to the manners of the times; and it is indeed difficult by any other means to account either for the seemingly unmeaning terms of the motto, or for the peculiar badge of the Garter, which seems to have no reference to any purpose either of military use or ornament." Mr. James considers that although the accounts long current of the amours of Edward III. and the Countess of Salisbury are proved to be false in so many particulars, "the whole tale becomes more than doubtful," while the statement which connects her name with the Order of the Garter is neither disproved nor improbable. "That a lady might accidentally drop her garter in the midst of the court is certainly within the bounds of possibility; and that a gallant and graceful monarch might raise it from the ground, and rebuke the merriment of his nobles by the famous words '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*,' is not at all unlikely. Another story, however, is told by the famous historian of the Order, which is still more probable. The queen herself is said to have met with the same accident on quitting the king on some occasion of ceremony. Several persons trod upon the blue riband of which the garter was composed; and at length Edward himself raised it, saying he would employ that riband in such a way that men should show it greater reverence. He then carried it to the queen, asking playfully what she imagined

* Camden says that Edward gave forth his *own* garter as a signal for a battle that sped well, which Du Chesne takes to be that of Cressy; but (adds Mr. Planché) we have yet to learn that garters *were worn by men in those days*; the leg bandages, laid aside in the previous century, having no affinity to the short garter and buckle, which forms the badge of this celebrated Order.—*Hist. Brit. Costume*, p. 146.

the court would think of such an occurrence, to which she made the famous reply which affords the motto of the Order."

MAGNA CHARTA.

To attack "the Bulwark of English Liberty," as the Great Charter has been termed, may be hazardous; but we suspect that in a few years this bright sun of freedom will be shorn of its beams by the rapid advances of the age in what may be termed the philosophy of history. Already the tide of opinion, which since the Revolution, and indeed since the reign of James I., had been flowing so strongly in favour of our liberties, now seems, among the higher and more literary classes, to set pretty decidedly the other way. Though we may still sometimes hear a demagogue chattering about the wittenagemot, it is far more usual to find sensible and liberal men who look on Magna Charta itself as the result of an uninteresting squabble between the king and the barons. Acts of force and injustice which strike the cursory inquirer, especially if he derives his knowledge from modern compilations more than the average tenor of events, are selected and displayed as fair samples of the law and of its administration. We are deceived by the comparatively perfect state of our present liberties, and forget that our superior security is far less owing to positive law than to the control which is exercised over government by public opinion through the general use of printing, and to the diffusion of liberal principles in policy through the same means. Thus, disgusted at a contrast which it was hardly candid to institute, we turn away from the records that attest the real, though imperfect, freedom of our ancestors; and are willing to be persuaded that the whole scheme of English polity, till the Commons took on themselves to assert their natural rights against James I., was at best but a mockery of popular privileges, hardly recognised in theory, and never regarded in effect.

"This system, when stripped of those slavish inferences that Brady and Carte attempt to build upon it, admits perhaps of no essential objection but its want of historical truth. God forbid that our rights to just and free government should be tried by a jury of antiquaries! Yet it is a generous pride that intertwines the consciousness of hereditary freedom with the memory of our ancestors; and no trifling argument against those who seem indifferent in its cause, that the character of the bravest and most virtuous among nations has not depended upon the accidents of race or climate, but has been gradually wrought by the plastic influence of civil rights, transmitted as a prescriptive inheritance through a long course of generations."—*Hallam's Middle Ages*, vol. iii.

The provisions of Magna Charta may be and are frequently abrogated or altered by Act of Parliament.

BENEFITS OF MONASTERIES.

Upon the suppression of the Monasteries, the poor of course

missed the doles which they had been accustomed to receive at their gates; and wheat rose to three times its former price, whereas it had varied very little for three centuries previously. The people attributed this solely to the dissolution of the monasteries, as indicated in an old Somersetshire song of the day :

“ I’ll tell thee what, good vellowe,
Before the vriars went hence
A bushel of the best wheate
Was zold for vourteen pence,
And vorty eggs a penny
That were both good and newe ;
And this I say myself have seen,
And yet I am no Jewe.”

The people were in error here ; although there was undoubtedly much almsgiving at the monasteries. Meekness, self-denial, and charity, “ rather than justice and veracity, were inculcated by the religious ethics of the middle ages ; and in the relief of indigence, it may, upon the whole, be asserted that the monks did not fall short of their profession.”—(*Hallam’s Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 350.) “ But it is a strange error to conceive that English monasteries, before the dissolution, fed the indigent part of the nation, and gave that general relief which the poor-laws are intended to afford.”

The greater cause of the above rise in the price of wheat was the pouring of the precious metals into Europe, or, in other words, the increase of money, through the discovery of America ; when the money-value of provisions became greater, although the real value remained the same.

EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE.

The story of Edward being called the Black Prince from the colour of his armour rests on no better authority than Barnes, who in his *Life of Edward III.* merely says :

“ Edward, the young Prince of Wales, whom from this time the French began to call *Le Noir*, or the Black Prince ;” and quotes apparently a certain chapter of Froissart, in which decidedly there is no mention of any such title. At tournaments he might have worn a sable surcoat with ostrich-feathers upon it, in accordance with his shield of peace, and the caparisons of his horse being of the same funereal hue, might have suggested the appellation ; but it is equally probable that he was called “ the black” from the terror his deeds inspired in the bosoms of his enemies ; and Æneas Sylvius, the historian of Bohemia, expressly says, “ On the feast of St. Ruffus the battle of Cressy was fought between the French and the English ; hence is that day still accounted *black*, dismal, and unlucky, which took away the lives of two kings by the sword of the enemy ;” alluding to John king of Bohemia and James king of Majorca : the fall of the latter monarch is, however, disputed. The first mention of Edward as the Black Prince in England occurs in a parliamentary paper of the second year of the reign of Richard II.—*Planché, History of British Costume*, pp. 144, 145.

"I have somewhere read," Barrington remarks, "a passage in one of the old chroniclers, where Edward is styled the *Black Prince* before he had distinguished himself in arms; besides this, all princes and generals wore the same armour for the greater part of their campaigns, and yet we never hear of a *Blue* or a *Red Prince*. To this it may be added, that in England, where he seems to have obtained this appellation, he could seldom have had occasion to wear armour of any colour."—*Observations on the more Ancient Statutes*, p. 312.

Mr. James, however, considers the colour of the surcoat to be the most probable method of accounting for Edward having received the name of Black Prince. He says:

"It was a very common custom of the times to designate knights by the colour of their arms; and, in some instances, the real name is almost entirely lost in the fictitious one. Thus, shortly after the days of the Black Prince, we find a person called the Green Knight continually mentioned in the old chronicles, while his real name is scarcely to be met with."—*History of Edward the Black Prince*.

"THE PRINCE OF WALES'S FEATHERS."

The assumption of a plume of three feathers by Edward the Black Prince is commonly referred to their having been the crest, arms, or badge, of John king of Bohemia, slain at the battle of Cressy; but this explanation is not traceable to any credible authority. It is first mentioned by Camden in his *Remains*, who says:

"The victorious Black Prince, his (Edward III.'s) sonne, used sometimes one feather, sometimes three, in token, as some say, of his speedy execution in all his services, as the posts in the Roman time were called *pterophori*, and wore feathers, to signifie their flying post haste; but the truth is, that he wonne them at the battle of Cressy from John king of Bohemia, whom he there slew."

Yet Camden does not state his authority for this "truth;" and neither Froissart, Walsingham, Knighton, nor any contemporary historian, alludes to so interesting an accident. Sandford, in his *Genealogical History*, quotes Camden; but admits that even in his time it was a disputed point, by giving another and not very improbable derivation circulated at that period:

"The German motto, 'Ich Dien,' generally rendered 'I serve,' first seen upon the tomb of Prince Edward at Canterbury, has perhaps helped to give currency, if not give birth, to the belief of the Bohemian origin of the feathers; but Camden himself did not credit this part of the story, for he goes on to state, though still without quoting his authority, that to the feathers the prince himself adjoined the old English word *ic dien* (*thegn*), that is, 'serve;' according to that of the apostle, 'the heir, while he is a childe, differeth nothing from a servant.'"

Mr. Planché, from whose *History of British Costume* we

quote these details, regards the three feathers as a fanciful badge, adopted by the prince from caprice, or suggested by some very trivial circumstance or quaint conceit no longer recollected. Mr. Planché conjectures ostrich feathers being a symbol of equity among the Egyptians; next the vulgar belief of the extraordinary digestive powers of the ostrich has afforded a remarkable simile to a writer of Prince Edward's own time, where he says, "Many a hero, *like the ostrich* (at Poitiers), was obliged to digest both iron and steel, or to overcome in death the sensations inflicted by the spear and the javelin." It should be added, that a writer in the *Quarterly Review* attributes the feathers to the *banner* of the king of Bohemia, "and not to the helmet, as is generally supposed."

SUMPTUARY LAWS.

Few enactments have been more erroneous in principle, or in operation more detrimental to national prosperity, than the Sumptuary Laws; by which, among ancient nations in the midst of their highest luxury, and in the earlier ages of our own history, the legislature so vainly, and it may be added so unjustly, endeavoured to prevent the various ranks of men from enjoying the fruits of their industry or of their patrimonial possessions. "There is hardly," says Mr. M'Culloch, "a single article among those that are now reckoned most indispensable to existence, or a single improvement of any sort, which has not been denounced at its introduction as a useless superfluity, or as being in some way injurious. Few articles of clothing are at present considered more indispensable than shirts; but there are instances on record of individuals being put in the pillory for presuming to wear so expensive and unnecessary a luxury! Chimneys were not commonly used in England till the middle of the sixteenth century; and in the introductory discourse to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1577, there is a bitter complaint of the multitude of chimneys lately erected, of the exchange of straw pallets for mattresses or flock-beds, and of wooden platters for earthenware and pewter. In another place, he laments that nothing but oak is used for building, instead of willow as heretofore; adding that 'formerly our houses indeed were of willow, but our men were of oak; but now that our houses are of oak, our men are not only of willow, but some altogether of straw, which is a sore alteration.'"

Mr. Hallam remarks, that the Sumptuary Laws enacted in France and England during the fourteenth century by the governments to restrain the extravagance of their subjects, may well justify the severe indignation which Adam Smith has poured upon all such interference with private expenditure.

“The kings of France and England were undoubtedly more egregious spendthrifts than any others in their dominions ; and contributed far more by their love of pageantry to excite a taste for dissipation in their people than by their ordinances to repress it.”—*Hist. Mid. Ages*, vol. iii. p. 413.

Our legislators have several times changed their sentiments as to this point ; for formerly there were a multitude of penal laws existing to restrain excess in apparel, chiefly made in the reigns of Edward III., Edward IV., and Henry VIII., against piked shoes, short doublets, and long coats ; all of which were repealed by statute 1 Jac. I. c. 25. But as to excess in diet, there still remains one ancient statute unrepealed, 10 Ed. III. st. 3, which ordains that no man shall be served at dinner or supper with more than two courses except upon some great holidays there specified, in which he may be served with three.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*, book ix. ch. 18.

LAW AND EQUITY.

By the Common Law of England is to be understood the ancient customary law of the country, which became finally settled *about* the fourteenth century. It is one of the great fallacies of the day, that there are in Westminster Hall two systems of law antagonistic to each other. Our Courts of Law and Equity administer the same system ; the only differences between them lying in their procedure, and that the former administer strict law, while the latter are supplemental tribunals, which not only have no power to repeal the law, but in truth carry its *principles* into effect by relaxing the operation of the law in certain peculiar cases only where its strictness might work hardship. This accords with the definitions of judicial equity given by Grotius and Lord Bacon.—*W. M. Best's Lectures to the Juridical Society*.

LAW AND CONSTITUTION.

It is a common fallacious notion of the day that the Law and Constitution of a country are not intimately connected. They must harmonise with each other, as the most ordinary suit at law may involve a most important constitutional question. And here it is that our system has such an immense advantage over the law of Rome, which had no constitution but the simple relation of sovereign and subject ; and it is impossible to deny that our constitution and law, taken together, constitute one of the few systems in the world where strength of government is united with a large amount of personal liberty.—*Ibid.*

TREASONABLE WORDS.

How far mere *words* spoken by an individual, and not relative to any treasonable act or design then in agitation, shall amount to treason, was formerly matter of doubt. We have

two instances in the reign of Edward IV. of persons executed for treasonable words: the one a citizen of London, who said he would make his son heir of the *crown*, being the sign of the house in which he lived; the other, a gentleman whose favourite buck the king killed in hunting, whereupon he wished it, horns and all, in the king's belly. These were esteemed hard cases; and the Chief-Justice Markham rather chose to leave his place than assent to the latter judgment. But now it seems clearly to be agreed that by the common law and the statute of Edward III. words spoken amount only to a high misdemeanor, and no treason. For they may be so spoken in heat, without any intention, or be mistaken, perverted, or misremembered by the hearers: their meaning depends always on their connection with other words and things; they may signify differently even according to the tone of voice with which they are delivered; and sometimes silence itself is more expressive than any discourse. As, therefore, there can be nothing more equivocal and ambiguous than words, it would indeed be unreasonable to make them amount to high treason. And accordingly in 4 Car. I., on a reference to all the judges concerning some very atrocious words spoken by one Pyne, they certified to the king, "that though the words were as wicked as might be, yet they were no treason; for unless it be by some particular statute, no words will be treason."—*Blackstone's Commentaries*.

This subject is fully and ably discussed by Mr. J. Forster, who maintains that words alone cannot amount to an overt act of treason; but if they are attended or followed by a consultation, meeting, or any act, then they will be evidence or a confession of the intent of such consultation, meeting, or act; and he concludes, that "loose words, not relative to facts, are at the worst no more than bare indications of the malignity of the heart."—*Christian's Notes*.

COMMON LAW AND STATUTE LAW.

It is one of the characteristic marks of English liberty, that our Common Law depends upon custom, which carries this internal evidence of freedom along with it, that it probably was introduced by the voluntary consent of the people.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*, introd.

Upon this Mr. Christian notes: "Lord Chief-Justice Wilmot has said, the Statute Law is the will of the legislature in writing; the Common Law is nothing else but statutes worn out by time. All our law began by consent of the legislature; and whether it is now law by usage or writing is the same thing. (2 *Wils.* 348.) And Statute Law and Common Law both originally flowed from the same fountain. (*Ibid.* 350.) And to the same effect Lord Hale declares, 'that many of those things that we now take for Common Law were undoubtedly acts of parliament, though not now to be found of record.' Though this is the probable origin of the greatest part of the Common Law, yet much of

it has certainly been introduced by usage, even of modern date, which general convenience has adopted."

TRUTH AND LIBEL.

It is immaterial with respect to the essence of a libel whether the matter of it be true or false, since the provocation, and not the falsity, is the thing to be punished criminally; though doubtless the falsehood of it may aggravate its guilt, and enhance its punishment.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*.

The words of Lord Mansfield, "the greater truth, the greater libel," which his enemies wished with much eagerness to convert to the prejudice of the noble peer's reputation as a judge, were founded in principle and supported by very ancient authority.

Lord Coke has said, "that the greater appearance there is of truth in any malicious invective, so much the more provoking it is."—5 Co 125.

Where truth is a greater provocation than falsehood, and therefore has a greater tendency to produce a breach of the public peace, then it is certainly true that the greater truth the greater libel.—*Christian's Notes to Blackstone*.

The above remarks, however, only refer to libels when prosecuted criminally. In an action or civil proceeding for a libel the defendant could always, and can still, plead as a justification that the matter published was true; and on his proving the truth, as so pleaded, he is entitled to a verdict in his favour. Now too, by the 6th and 7th Vic. c. xcvi. s. 6, in criminal proceedings for a libel the truth of the matters charged may be inquired into, and may amount to a defence if it appear that the publication of such matters were for the public benefit.

THE LAW OF THE ROAD.

In this country the Law of the Road is, that horses and carriages should respectively keep the left side of the road, and consequently in meeting should pass each other on the whip-hand. This law has not been enacted by statute, and is so modern, that perhaps, says Mr. Christian, "this is the first time that it has been noticed in a book of law."—(*Note to Blackstone's Commentaries*, 1809.) "But general convenience discovered the necessity of it; and the judges have so far confirmed it, as to declare frequently at *nisi prius* that he who disregards this salutary rule is answerable in damages for all the consequences. The action in which the rule is applied, viz. for negligently driving a carriage by which any one is injured, is as ancient as the common law; but the uniform determination of the judges that the non-observance of this rule is negligence is of modern date.

"It is now decided that where an injury is done by a man's driving his carriage on the wrong side of the road, the action must be trespass *vi et armis*. Lord Ellenborough and the court

laid down generally, that where there is an immediate injury from an immediate act of force, the proper remedy is trespass; and wilfulness is not necessary to constitute trespass. (3 *East*, 593.) When two carriages meet, the impact is a reciprocal act of force; but the force of that only is wrongful which is on the wrong side of the way."

The law as to *Crossing the Road* has been thus laid down by Mr. Justice Coleridge. In 1856 an action had been instituted by a widow to recover damages for the loss of her husband, killed by being run over by an omnibus; the judge stated, that when passing along a street the side pavements were for foot-passengers and the centre of the street or roadway was for carriages and horses, and those persons who wished to cross were bound to watch their opportunity—to use due care and caution. But at the end or corner of a street, if a foot-passenger wished to cross, it should be known that the centre of the street belonged as much to the foot-passenger as to the carriage; and he had as much right to tell the driver of a carriage to wait for him as the driver had to make him wait.

THE SLAVE-TRADE.—THE NEGRO-SLAVE SET FREE.

The spirit of liberty "is so deeply implanted in our constitution, and rooted even in our very soil, that a slave or negro the moment he lands in England falls under the protection of the laws, and so far becomes a free man, though the master's right to his service may *possibly* still continue."—*Blackstone's Commentaries*.

Upon this Mr. Christian notes, "It is not to the soil, or to the air of England, that negroes are indebted for their liberty, but to the efficacy of the writ of *habeas corpus*, which can only be executed by the sheriff in an English county. I do not see how the master's right to the service can possibly continue; it can only arise from a contract, which the negro in a state of slavery is incapable of entering into with his master.

Liberty by the English law depends not upon the complexion; and what was said even in the time of Queen Elizabeth is now substantially true,—that the air of England is too pure for a slave to breathe in."

This remark of Mr. Christian is somewhat obscure: the writ of *habeas corpus* is not the foundation of a slave's liberty; it is only a process for recovering the freedom of a slave, or any other person, when unlawfully arrested or detained. A slave on landing in England need not wait for a *habeas corpus*, but may assume his liberty at once by walking off or resisting, with the aid of the police if necessary, those who should attempt to stop him.

The principle so much boasted of by Englishmen, that slavery is abhorrent to the natural or common law of a civilised country, was established by a judgment of the Court of Admi-

rality in France in 1738, long before it was admitted as clearly law in England. It was only in 1772 that the memorable exertions of Granville Sharp, in the case of the negro Somerset, obtained from the Court of Queen's Bench the decision that slavery is inconsistent with the common law of England, and that consequently any slave setting his foot on English ground becomes that instant free.

VERBAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Promises merely verbal, and not in writing and signed by the party to answer for the debt, default, or miscarriage of another, are of no avail in law, although they are commonly thought binding. Thus, if two persons go to a shop, and one orders goods, and the other says, "If he does not pay I will," or "I will see you paid," he is not bound unless his engagement is reduced into writing. In all such cases the question is, who is the buyer, or to whom the credit is given, and who is the surety: and the question, from all the circumstances, must be ascertained by the jury; for if the person for whose use the goods are furnished be liable at all, any promise by a third person to discharge the debt must be in writing, otherwise it is void."—(*Christian's Notes to Blackstone's Commentaries*, book iii. ch. 9.) It is the fourth section of the 29 Car. II. c. 3, commonly called "the Statute of Frauds," that requires the promise to be in writing.

TENDER IN PAYMENT.

A Tender in Payment is rarely made in a legal manner. People commonly clog it with some condition, which makes it no Tender in law. One man goes to another, and says, "Here is your money; but I must have a receipt in full of all demands." A Tender to be good must be an unconditional one, clogged with no stipulation whatever.—*Baron Maule*.

No copper coin can be tendered when the debt is such an amount that it can be paid in silver or gold. No tender of silver coin above forty shillings is legal, and Bank-of-England notes are a legal tender (56 Geo. III. c. 68; 3 & 4 Wm. IV. c. 98). Still Bank-notes are not virtually a legal tender, being convertible on demand at the Bank into gold at its Mint price.

LIABILITY OF DRUNKARDS.

We frequently hear Intoxication pleaded in extenuation, if not exculpation, of offences against the laws; but those who take such a course must be unaware of the maxim in legal practice, that those who presume to commit crimes when drunk must submit to punishment when sober. Indeed, acts

of violence committed under the influence of drunkenness are held to be aggravated rather than otherwise; nor can the person reasonably bring it forward as an extenuation of any folly or misdemeanor which he may chance to commit. A bond signed in intoxication holds in law, and is perfectly binding, unless it can be shown that the person who signed it was inebriated by the collusion or contrivance of those to whom the bond was given, or that the intoxication was so excessive as to deprive him of reason.

KEEPING PIGEONS.

The statute for view of Frank-pledge, 18 Edw. II. sec. 33, mentions the punishing of those who take Pigeons in the winter, which proves that they never could have been considered (according to some writers on the law) as a nuisance, and that the keeping of them was indictable in the leet; the contrary of which is most expressly declared.

The nuisance apprehended from pigeons is their eating up the seed-corn after it is sown.* It hath of late been discovered, however, that, like most other animals who are persecuted for supposed mischief, pigeons are of singular use in consuming the seeds of weeds, as also the eggs of noxious insects, and the insects themselves. Every one who hath woods belonging to him orders the bird called the woodpecker to be destroyed. This bird, however, cannot perforate with its bill a tree that is sound, and therefore gives timely notice of its decay; after which it only burdeneth the ground, and should leave room for a more profitable one to grow in its place. I could wish that a proper fable was added to the common collection, to impress an early sense of tenderness in children to animals of all kinds; their barbarity being often excused under pretence of destroying what does harm.—*Barrington on Anct. Stat.* pp. 184, 5.

RIGHT TO GLEANING.†

The antiquity of this custom has led to its being considered a right, whereas it is but a permission. “It hath been said, that by the common law and custom of England the poor are allowed to enter and glean upon another’s ground after the harvest without being guilty of trespass, which humane provision seems borrowed from the Mosaical law.”—*Blackstone’s Commentaries*, book iii. chap. 12.

Upon this Mr. Christian notes: “Two actions of trespass have been brought in the Common Pleas against gleaners, with an intent to try the general question, viz. whether such a right existed. In the first, the defendant pleaded that he, being a poor, necessitous, and indigent person, entered the plaintiff’s close to glean; in the second, the defendant’s plea

* Hartlib (in his *Legacy of Husbandry*) supposes that there were in his time 26,000 dove-houses in England; and allowing 500 pair to each house, and four bushels yearly to be destroyed or consumed by each pair, makes by this calculation the loss of corn very amazing: $26,000 \times 500 \times 4 = 52,000,000$ bushels!—See *Fuller’s Worthies*, p. 279.

† See *Things not generally Known*, p. 128, 2d edit.

was as before, with the addition that he was an inhabitant legally settled within the parish : to the plea in each case there was a general demurrer. Mr. J. Gould delivered a learned judgment in favour of gleaning : but the other three judges were clearly of opinion that this claim had no foundation in law ; that the only authority to support it was an extrajudicial dictum of Lord Hale ; that it was a practice incompatible with the exclusive enjoyment of property, and was productive of vagrancy and many mischievous consequences."—1 *H. Bl. Rep.* 51.

THE MILLER'S TOLL.

The practice of Millers taking a certain quantity out of every sack of corn sent to them to be ground is not so direct an act of knavery as is commonly supposed ; for we find it justified by law in a statute *incerti temporis*, no editor having been able to say whether it belongs to the reign of Henry III., Edward I., or II. ; but it is appended to the eighteenth year of Edward III. Its direction with regard to the toll seems, however, to be very vague and uncertain, as it is to be regulated "*secundum fortitudinem cursûs aquæ*" (according to the strength of the water-course) ; "which," observes Barrington, "would puzzle a Smeaton of the present times to estimate with accuracy, and, I am afraid, was infinitely beyond the natural philosophers and civil engineers of those reigns."—*Obs. Anct. Stat.* p. 187.

THE LAW OF GARDENS.

Tenants, when giving up their occupation of a Garden, finding they cannot remove the trees and shrubs, often have them cut down ; but they are actionable, for the law prohibits waste with any malevolent intentions. The decision given in the case of *Buckland v. Butterfield* establishes this point ; for "a tenant is liable to pay for the waste, if he cuts down or destroys," &c. And it has also been decided by Lord Denman, Mr. Justice Littledale, and Mr. Justice Parke, that a tenant cannot remove a border of box planted in a garden by himself, but that it belongs to the landlord in the absence of any agreement to the contrary. In the course of the argument, the counsel for the tenant asked : "Could not the tenant remove flowers which he had planted in the ground ?" Mr. Justice Littledale instantly said, "No."

RIGHT OF WAY AND FUNERALS.

An opinion is prevalent in many parts of this country that whatever may be the path of a Funeral towards the place of burial, a public Right of Way along such path arises. Many years since, an action was brought for the purpose of contesting a claim of this nature ; but the judge declaring that it was founded upon a foolish Error, the opinion of a jury was not allowed to be given upon it. The opinion is of some antiquity,

as the following occurrence in the fourteenth century proves. A chaplain of the Bishop of Exeter died, and ought, according to a rule still observed, to have been buried in the parish of Farringdon. The bishop directed the interment to take place in the adjoining parish of Cliff Tomeson. One Tomeson, hearing that the body of the chaplain was about to be brought over his grounds, and that, as the chronicle states, a *lich-way* would be made through them, assembled his servants, and attempted to stop its progress as it was carried over a bridge. A scuffle ensued, and the body was thrown into the water. The *lich-way* was not made; but the Bishop of Exeter amply revenged himself for the proceedings.—(*Penny Magazine*.) *Lic* is a Saxon word signifying a dead body; and *lic-gate* is a shed or covered place at the entrance to a churchyard, intended to shelter the corpse and mourners from rain.

A Correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* notes, that in Somerset and Devon the leach (or lich) road is the path by which a funeral is carried to church. It often deviates from the high road, and even from any path now in use; in which case the country people will break down the hedges rather than pass by an unhallowed way.

BURYING IN CROSS-ROADS.

The practice of burying in Cross-Roads has in modern times been regarded as a mark of indignity; but such was not its original intention. In ancient times, "it was usual to erect crosses at the junction of four cross-roads, as a place self-consecrated, according to the piety of the age; and it was not with a notion of indignity, but in a spirit of charity, that those excluded from holy rites were buried at the crossing roads, as places next in sanctity to consecrated ground."—*British Magazine*.

CARRYING A DARK-LANTERN AND AIR-GUN.

There is an absurd vulgar Error that it is not lawful to go about with a dark-lantern; which Mr. Daines Barrington refers to a clause in a law of police, *Statuta Civitatis Londin.*, 13th Edw. III. stat. 3, enacting that, in consequence of continual affrays in the streets of London, "no arms of any kind should be carried but by a *grant seigneur, ou autre prodome de bone conyssaunce*; and even if such a person was in the streets during the night, he is enjoined to have a light with him." Elsewhere the same writer attributes this error to Guy Fawkes's dark-lantern* in the Powder-plot.—*Obs. Anct. Stat.* p. 136.

Equally unwarranted was the belief that it was illegal to

* An old lantern is shown at the Bodleian Library, which is said to be the identical lantern found in the cellar. See *Curiosities of History*, pp. 139, 140.

carry an Air-gun, which has been in our times regarded as a toy, except in the few instances where it has been the instrument of covert and cowardly revenge. — *Barrington's Obs. Anct. Stat.* p. 422.

Although the Air-pump is a modern invention, yet the Air-gun, which is so nearly allied to it in the construction of its valve and condensing syringe, existed long antecedent to it; for it is recorded that an air-gun was made for Henry IV. by Marin, of Liseau in Normandy, as early as 1408, and another was preserved in the armoury at Schmetan bearing the date of 1474. The air-gun of the present day is, however, very different from the ancient one.

EXEMPTIONS BY MARRIAGE.

Formerly there was entertained a vulgar notion that a woman's marrying a man under the gallows would save him from the execution. This probably arose from a wife having brought an appeal against the murderer of her husband; who afterwards, repenting of the provocation of her lover, not only forgave the offence, but was willing to marry the appellee.

In the *Domestick Intelligence* of March 30, 1680, it is stated that, "at the execution of a woman named Clark, for firing her master's house in Southwark, there was a fellow who deigned to marry her under the gallows (according to the ancient laudable custom), when she, being in hopes of a reprieve, seemed unwilling; but when the rope was about her neck she cried she was willing, and then the fellow's friends dissuaded him from marrying her; and so she lost her husband and her life together." There is added, "We know of no such custome allowed by law, that any man's offering at a place of execution to marry a woman condemned shall save her."

In like manner, it was imagined that when a man intended to marry a woman who was in debt, if he took her from the hands of the priest clothed only in her shift, he would not be liable to her engagements. Another version of this error is, that the woman might clear herself of all debts by crossing the street in which she lived only wearing her shift.

There is a vile offence against the law amongst the most profligate of the lower classes, which some of them have magnified into law—of Selling a Wife.

These errors are explained more at length in *Things not generally Known*, p. 120-123.

ENGAGED LADIES.

It is probably not generally known, that when once a woman has accepted an offer of marriage, all she has, or expects to have, becomes virtually the property of the man thus accepted as a husband; and no gift or deed executed by her between the period of acceptance and the marriage is held to be valid; for were she permitted to give away or otherwise set-

tle her property, he might be disappointed of the wealth he looked to in making the offer.—*Westminster Review*.

THE WEDDING-RING.

The Ring is no longer an essential part of the marriage-ceremony, as generally supposed, the Act of Parliament passed in 1837 having instituted marriage to be a civil contract; though it does not forbid the use of the ring, which holds its accustomed place to distinguish the maiden from the wife. It is the right of a woman, hallowed too long by custom and an obvious utility to fall into disuse through the silence of an Act of Parliament. Its continual use furnishes another of the many proofs that customs and habits spontaneously resulting from the exigencies and natural circumstances of mankind are stronger and more permanent than written laws. The whole marriages before the superintendent-registrars do not exceed a fifty-seventh part of all the marriages in England and Wales. The editor of the *Historical Register* having inquired extensively throughout the country into the use of the wedding-ring in such marriages, found, out of thirty-five cases, only two where the wedding-ring was not observed to have been used.

The superintendent-registrar at Birmingham says he "never married a couple without a ring." At Walsall, "the parties always use a ring." "The ring is always used" at Derby. "The people always bring a ring" at Stafford. The superintendent-registrar at Sheffield "has seen the ring used invariably." "A ring is always used" at Liverpool; so at Manchester, and at Stockport, and at Wells. At Worcester, on one occasion, the parties were so poor that they used a brass ring, having no better one. The bride's friends indignantly protested that the ring ought to have been gold, and the superintendent-registrar was threatened with an indictment for permitting the use of a ring of such base metal. He says that the people in his district "won't believe the marriage to be good without the ring." The superintendent-registrar at Bristol, where these marriages are numerous, "always saw a ring used but once." He asked if the parties had brought one. The man answered that it was not necessary; but the woman entreated to have one. The superintendent took part with the woman, and represented that the absence of the ring would expose the wife to insult after her marriage; and he hesitated to proceed with the marriage until a ring was produced. The man yielded at last and fetched one, and the woman's gratitude brought tears into her eyes.

THE WEDDING-RING FINGER.

This is the fourth finger on the left hand. Why this particular digit should have received such a token of honour and trust beyond all its congeners, both in pagan and Christian times, has been variously interpreted. The most common explanation is, according to Sir Thomas Browne, "presuming therein that a particular vessel, nerve, vein, or artery, is conferred thereto from the heart;" which direct vascular commu-

nication Browne shows to be anatomically incorrect. Macrobius gives another reason, which may perhaps satisfy those anatomists who are not satisfied with the above. "Pollex," he says, "or *thumb* (whose offices and general usefulness are sufficiently indicated from its Latin derivative *polleo*, and from its Greek equivalent *anticheir*, which means 'as good as a hand'), is too busy to be set apart for any such special employment; the next finger to the thumb, being but half protected on that side besides having other work to do, is also ineligible; the opprobrium attaching to the middle finger, called *medicus*, puts it entirely out of the question; and as the little finger stands exposed, and is moreover too puny to enter the lists in such a contest, the spousal honours devolve naturally on *pronubus*, the wedding-finger."

In the *British Apollo*, 1788, it is urged that the fourth finger was chosen from its being not only less used than either of the rest, but more capable of preserving a ring from bruises; having this one quality peculiar to itself, that it cannot be extended but in company with some other finger, whereas the rest may be stretched out to their full length and straightness.

FLEET MARRIAGES.*

Before the passing of the Marriage Act, in 1754, a common notion prevailed that the solemnisation of a marriage by a person in holy orders rendered it sacred and indissoluble. This erroneous idea doubtless arose from the fact of marriage by civil contract being valid in some cases, whilst in others its performance in the church was indispensable. Hence arose the scandals and indecencies of the notorious Fleet Marriages, which were performed in the Fleet prison by a set of drunken swearing parsons, with their myrmidons, who wore black coats, and pretended to be clerks and registers to the Fleet. In this way, from October 1704 to February 1705, there were performed in the Fleet 2594 marriages without either license or certificate of banns.

Many of these weddings were really performed in the chapel of the prison; though, as the practice extended, "the Fleet Parsons" and tavern-keepers in the neighbourhood fitted up a room in their lodgings or houses as a chapel; and most of the taverns near the Fleet kept their own registers. In 1702, the Bishop of London interfered to prevent this scandalous practice, but with little effect; and it was not until the Act

* The scandalous abuses of Gretna-Green and other Border marriages are noticed in *Things not generally Known*, p. 121. They have at length been virtually suppressed by being rendered unnecessary. By Act 19 & 20 Vic. cap. 96, after December 1856 no irregular marriage contracted in Scotland by declaration, acknowledgment, or ceremony, shall be valid unless one of the parties has at the date thereof his or her usual place of residence there, or had lived in Scotland for twenty-one days next preceding such marriage, any law, custom, or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

of Parliament came into operation, March 25, 1754, that the custom was put an end to. On the day previously (March 24) in one register-book alone were recorded 217 marriages, which were the last of the Fleet-weddings. In 1821, a collection of these register-books, weighing more than a ton (recording Fleet-marriages between 1686 and 1754), was purchased by Government, and deposited in the Registry Office of the Bishop of London, Godliman Street, Doctors' Commons. Many celebrated names figure in these registers; and although they are not now, as formerly, received in evidence on trials, they are not altogether useless as matters of record, &c. For their history, their parsons, and registers, see Mr. J. Burn's volume.—*Curiosities of London*, p. 302.

THAT FIRST COUSINS MAY MARRY BUT SECOND COUSINS CANNOT.

If there is any foundation for this statement, it consists rather in the marriage of first cousins once removed than of second cousins. It will be seen that the latter relationship belongs to the same generation; but it is not so with the former, which partakes more of the nature of uncle and aunt with nephew and niece.—*Notes and Queries*, No. 213.

The following quotation from Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law*, by Phillimore, vol. ii. p. 449, explains the matter:

By the civil law first cousins are allowed to marry, but by the canon law both first and second cousins (in order to make dispensations more frequent and necessary) are prohibited; therefore, when it is vulgarly said that first cousins may marry, but second cousins cannot, probably this arose by confounding these two laws; for first cousins may marry by the civil law, and second cousins cannot by the canon law.

The difference of the computation (of consanguinity) by the civil and canon laws may be expressed shortly thus: the civilians take the degrees in both lines to the common ancestor; the canonists take only the number of degrees in the longest line. Hence, when the canon law prohibits all marriages between persons related to each other within the seventh degree, this would restrain all marriages within the fourteenth degree of the civil law. All marriages are prohibited between persons who are related to each other within the third degree, according to the computation of the civil law. This affords a solution to the vulgar paradox, that first cousins may marry and second cousins cannot. For first cousins and all cousins may marry by the civil law, and neither first nor second cousins can marry by the canon law. But all the prohibitions of the canon law might have been dispensed with. It is said that the canon-law computation has been adopted by the law of England; yet I do not know a single instance in which we have occasion to refer to it.—*Christian's Notes to Blackstone's Commentaries*, b. ii. c. 14.

SUICIDE AND INSANITY.

A *felo-de-se* must be in his senses, else it is no crime. But this excuse ought not to be strained to that length to which our coroners' juries are apt to carry it, viz. that the very act of suicide is an evidence of insanity, as if every man who acts contrary to reason had no reason at all; for the same argument would prove every other criminal *non compos* as well as the

self-murderer. The law very rationally judges that every melancholy or hypochondriac fit does not deprive a man of the capacity of discerning right from wrong, which is necessary to form a legal excuse. And, therefore, if a real lunatic kill himself in a lucid interval he is a *felo-de-se* as much as another man.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*, b. iv. c. 14. Upon this Mr. Christian notes :

Many are found insane by a coroner's jury who have done no irrational act or given no proofs of insanity before the act of suicide, and who would never have been found insane by a jury at the assizes, under the direction of a judge, if they had killed any other person. Yet the principles of the law in both cases are precisely the same.

UNCERTAINTY OF THE LAW.

A matter of frequent complaint and text of invective or sarcasm against the Law, is its Uncertainty. It is of course uncertain ; for the decision of every case is an exercise of human judgment, which is confessedly both fallible and various. To a certain extent, the law is and must be a sort of lottery. No two men would go to law with one another if each did not think that he had a chance of what both cannot have,—a decision in his favour. *But the uncertainty lies in the nature of things, in the case that is to be tried, and not in the law.* Every case that is brought into a court of law is a contest of probabilities ; and whenever such a contest is nearly balanced, different minds will be liable to come to different conclusions about the question at issue, and there will always exist the chance or possibility of its being decided erroneously. Human justice can only be at the best an endeavour to be just. Whatever stands in the way of such an endeavour being made with the best chance of a right result, should be removed or rectified ; the law is not what it ought to be until that is done : indeed, that is the first or principal thing to be kept in view in all legal reforms ; yet it is an end to which only an approximation can ever be made, which never can be fully or literally attained. A court of law is essentially an area of conflict, a battle-field ; and the battles there fought must have the uncertainty of all other battles. They would not otherwise be fought or entered upon. There would be no use for courts of law to try disputed cases, if the issue of every such case were not more or less uncertain. But the uncertainty is not in the law, nor made by the law. It lies in the case itself, in the question which the court is called upon to decide ; and it comes out of imperfections and disabilities inherent in our human nature, which no legal or other reform can cure.—*From a Paper entitled Popular Fallacies about Law and Lawyers ; Penny Magazine, Third Series.*

THE GUILLOTINE.

There are two Errors in the common history of this instrument of death, employed to this day in public executions in France. It is said to have been invented by Dr. Guillotin, who is stated to have been one of the very first that suffered death by its stroke; but upon reference to the biography of Dr. Guillotin we find that, during the French Revolution, Guillotin merely pointed out the adoption of this machine, which had been long known as proper for the infliction of death without giving any pain to the sufferer; and for that reason it was chosen as a kind of compromise among the first French revolutionists, many of whom wanted to abolish the punishment of death altogether. Unfortunately for Guillotin, some wags gave his name to the machine of which he was not the inventor, and which he had only brought into notice. It is true that Guillotin was imprisoned, and nearly fell a victim to the carnage of the revolution; but he escaped, and after the termination of his political career resumed the functions of a physician, and became one of the founders of the Academy of Medicine at Paris. He died May 26, 1814, aged seventy-six, after enjoying up to his last moments the esteem of all who knew him.

Possibly the error may have arisen from the Regent Morton of Scotland being the first person executed by the Maiden, an instrument resembling the guillotine, the pattern of which he had brought from abroad to behead the Laird of Pennycuick of that ilk.

It is said that the *slanting* descent of the hatchet of the guillotine, which renders instant decapitation more certain, and consequently less painful, was an improvement suggested by Louis XVI. himself, who had a great taste for mechanics.

INEFFICACY OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENTS.

The Error of supposing Capital Punishment to be the preventive of crime is thus pertinently shown by a popular writer: "Those eras are in history found fatal to liberty in which cruel punishments predominate. Lenity should be the guardian of moderate governments; severe penalties, the instruments of despotism, may give a sudden check to temporary evils, but they have a tendency to extend themselves to every class of crimes, and their frequency hardens the sentiment of the people. *Une loi rigoureuse produit des crimes.* The excess of the penalty flatters the imagination with the hope of impunity, and thus becomes an advocate with the offender for the perpetration of the offence."

The convicts who have stolen cloth (22 Car. II. c. xxv. s. 3) from the tenters, or fustian from the bleaching-ground (4 Geo. I. c. 16, and 18 Geo. II. c. 19), or a lamb from their landlord's pasture, knew the law

to have assigned death without the benefit of clergy to each of their offences; but, in the depth of ignorance and profligacy, mere instinct informed them that common humanity would recoil at the idea, and they relied for their security on the ingenuity of mercy to evade the law.

Legislators should, then, remember that the acerbity of justice deadens its execution; and that the increase of human corruption proceeds, not from the moderation of punishments, but from the impunity of criminals.—*Eden, Principles of Penal Law*, 3d edit. 1785, p. 14.

We leave each other to rot like scarecrows in the hedges, and our gibbets are crowded with human carcasses. May it not be doubted whether a forced familiarity with such objects can have any other effect than to blunt the sentiments and destroy the benevolent prejudices of the people?—*Ibid* p. 80.

The arguments against the *right* to inflict Capital Punishment are absurd. Those founded on the value and sanctity of human life prove too much, because, if true, life could not be taken to repress the most dangerous insurrection. Capital punishment is the *ultima ratio* between sovereign and subject, as war is the *ultima ratio* between state and state; and no instance can be produced of any country which renounced it; for although Catherine of Russia, the state of Louisiana, and some others, abolished the punishment of death by the ordinary course of law, they did not abolish the right to resort to martial law, or the right to take life for military offences. The statistical papers by which the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment profess to show that fewer executions take place in some countries than in England are therefore imperfect; they should further tell how many times each country has been placed under martial law, and how many lives, guilty and innocent, were sacrificed under it.—*W. M. Best*.

WAGER OF BATTLE.

Judge Blackstone, after enumerating the other specimens of trial by ordeal, says: "The next, which remains in force, though very rarely in use, owes its introduction among us to the princes of the Norman line; and that is the Trial by Battel, duel, or combat." It will be in the recollection of many of our readers, that in the year 1818 an appeal was made to the Court of King's Bench to award this trial. The body of Mary Ashford was found drowned, with marks of dreadful ill-treatment upon it, in a pit in a field; and Abraham Thornton was committed to take his trial for the murder. The grand jury found a true bill; but after a long and patient trial, the petty jury returned a verdict of "not guilty." The country were much divided on the subject; and much contradictory evidence was given on the trial, especially as to time and distance. Mr. Justice Holroyd, who tried the case, was satisfied with the verdict. The poor murdered girl's relations preferred an appeal which involved a solemn tender of trial by battle. It would be useless to dwell on the arguments used by the counsel on either side; the court divided in favour of the prisoner's claim to trial by wager of battle, and the challenge was formally given by throwing down a glove upon the floor of the court; but the combat did not take place, and the prisoner

escaped. In consequence of the above revival of this barbarous practice, a bill was brought in by the then attorney-general, and was passed into a law, by which wager of battle and all similar proceedings were abolished altogether. The preamble of the bill is very short and pithy :

“Whereas appeals of murder, treason, felony, or other offences, and the manner of proceeding therein, have been found oppressive ; and the trial by battle in any suit is a mode of trial unfit to be used ; and it is expedient that the same should be wholly abolished.”

The whimsical combat between Horner and Peter, in Shakspeare's *Henry VI.*, was found by the poet thus picturesquely told by Holinshed :

“A certain armourer was apprehended of treason by a servant of his own ; for proof thereof a day was given them to fight in Smithfield, insomuch that in conflict the said armourer was overcome and slain, but yet by misgoverning of himself ; for on the morrow when he should come to the field fresh and fasting, his neighbours came to him, and gave him wine and strong drink in such excessive sort, that he was therewith distempered, and reeled as he went, and so was slain without guilt. As for the false servant, he lived not long unpunished ; for being convict of felony in court of assize, he was judged to be hanged, and so was at Tyburn.”

This incident, as related with variations by Shakspeare, in all probability presents an accurate representation of the forms which attended a Wager of Battle. The names of the combatants were John Daveys and William Catour. The barriers it appears were brought from Smithfield to Westminster ; a large quantity of sand and gravel was laid down, and the place of battle was strewn with rushes. The return of the expenses contains the following item : “Also, paid to officers for watchyng of ye ded man in Smythfelde ye same day and ye nyghte after yt ye bataill was done, and for horshyre for ye officers at ye execution doying, and for ye hangman's labour, xjs. 6d.” The hangman's labour was subsequent to the battle. All the historians agree that the armourer was slain by his servant ; but the ceremonies attending the punishment of a traitor were gone through with the dead body.

Mr. Hewitt, in his able work on *Ancient Arms and Armour*, says : “In the thirteenth century, we first obtain a pictorial representation of the legal duel or wager of battle ; rude it is true, but curiously confirming the testimony that has come down to us of the arms and apparel of the champions.” Mr. Hewitt's woodcut has been carefully traced from one of the miscellaneous rolls in the Tower, of the time of Henry III. The combatants are Walter Blowberne and Haman le Stare ; the latter being the vanquished champion, and figuring a second time undergoing the punishment incident to his defeat, that is, hanging. Both are armed with the quadrangular bowed shield and a baton headed with a double beak ; and are bare-headed, with cropped hair in conformity with an ordinance of the camp-fight. An example agreeing with this description, with the exception of the square shields appearing

to be flat instead of bowed, occurs on a tile pavement found in 1856 within the precincts of Chertsey Abbey, Surrey.—*Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.* No. 45.

TRIAL BY JURY AND TRIAL BY BATTLE.

It is difficult to concur in the feelings with which some authors weep over the supersession of the *Saxon Trial by Jury*, and the establishment of the *Norman Trial by Battle*. The rude elements of our jury-trials certainly appear to have been derived from the Saxons; but it has required centuries to elaborate them into the form they have now taken. The Saxon trial by jury, if it may be so called, was a useful but very simple and imperfect contrivance; and when we consider that the various ordeals by fire, by water, by hot iron, by the cross, and by the *coronel*, or morsel of execration, were at least as purely and properly Saxon modes of trial as the use of a jury, we may the less lament that the subjects of the Harefoots and the Ironsides should have been compelled to adopt the more glorious ordeal of arms.

“These indisputable monuments of our ancient rudeness are a very sufficient confutation of the panegyrical declamations, in which some persons would persuade us that the crude institutions of an unlettered people had attained a height which the united efforts of necessity, learning, inquiry, and experience, can hardly reach to in many ages!”
—*Burke's English History*.

This mode of trial, like other Norman customs, was a presumptuous appeal to Providence, under an expectation that Heaven would unquestionably give the victory to the innocent or injured party. The last trial by battle that was waged in the Court of Common Pleas in Westminster was in the thirteenth year of Queen Elizabeth, A.D. 1571, and was held in Tothill Fields. This trial of wager by battel was fought not by the parties themselves, in cases of appeal of murder; but by champions chosen by them *in a writ of right*. Nearly the same ceremonies were observed in each case.

ARREST AFTER DEATH.

It was long erroneously believed that the body of a debtor might be taken in execution after his death; which idle story we remember to have been repeated in connection with the embarrassments of Sheridan at the time of his death, in 1816. Such was, however, the practice in Prussia till its abolition by the *Code Frédéricque*.

LAWS RELATING TO GIPSIES.

The history of these remarkable people has been glanced at on p. 83. The following are the laws relating to them:

In 1530, they are described by statute 22 Henry VIII. c. 10 as “*cat-*”

landish people, calling themselves Egyptians, using no craft nor feat of merchandise, who have come into this realm and gone from shire to shire and place to place in great company, and used great, subtil, and crafty means to deceive the people; bearing them in hand that they, by palmestry, could tell men's and women's fortunes; and so many times by craft and subtilty have deceived the people of their money, and have also committed many heinous felonies and robberies." Whereupon they are directed to avoid the realm, and not to return under pain of imprisonment and forfeiture of their goods and chattels; and upon their trials for any felony which they may have committed, they shall not be entitled to a jury *de medietate linguæ*. And afterwards it is enacted, by Statute 1 and 2 Ph. and M. c. 4 and 5 Eliz. c. 20, that if any such persons shall be imported into this kingdom, the importer shall forfeit 40*l*. And if the Egyptians themselves remain one month in this kingdom; or if any person, being fourteen years old (whether natural-born subject or stranger), which hath been seen or found in the fellowship of such Egyptians, or which hath disguised him or herself like them, shall remain in the same one month, at one or several times,—it is felony without benefit of clergy; and Sir Matthew Hale informs us, that at one Suffolk assizes no less than thirteen gipsies were executed upon these statutes a few years before the Restoration. But, to the honour of our national humanity, there are no instances more modern than this of carrying these laws into practice.—*Blackstone's Commentaries*, book iv. ch. 13.

The severe statute of 5 Eliz. c. 20 is repealed by 23 Geo. III. c. 51; and so much of 1 and 2 Ph. and M. c. 4 as inflicts capital punishment is repealed by 1 Geo. IV. c. 116. And gipsies are now only punishable under the Vagrant Act, which declares, "That all persons pretending to be gipsies, or wandering in the habit or form of Egyptians, shall be decreed as rogues and vagabonds." 17 Geo. II. c. 5.—*Christian's Notes*.

LAWS RELATING TO WITCHCRAFT.

The belief in Witchcraft has doubtless been greatly fostered by the laws enacted for its punishment. Blackstone says:

"To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God, in various passages both of the Old and New Testament: and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested or by prohibitory laws, which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits. The civil law punishes with death not only the sorcerers themselves, but also those who consult them, imitating in the former the express law of God, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' (*Exodus* xxii. 18.) And our own laws, both before and since the Conquest, have been equally penal, ranking this crime in the same class with heresy, and condemning both to the flames. The president Montesquieu ranks them also both together, but with a very different view; laying it down as an important maxim, that we ought to be very circumspect in the prosecution of magic and heresy, because the most unexceptionable conduct, the purest morals, and the constant practice of every duty in life, are not a sufficient security against the suspicion of crimes like these. And indeed the ridiculous stories that are generally told, and the many impostors and delusions that have been discovered in all ages, are enough to demolish all faith in such a dubious crime—if the contrary evidence were not also extremely strong. Wherefore it seems to be the most eli-

gible way to conclude, with an ingenious writer of our own,* that in general there has been such a thing as witchcraft; though one cannot give credit to any particular modern instance of it.

"Our forefathers were stronger believers, when they enacted, by Statute 33 Hen. VIII. c. 8, all witchcraft and sorcery to be felony without benefit of clergy; and again, by Statute 1 Jac. I. c. 12, that all persons invoking any evil spirit, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding, any evil spirit; or taking up dead bodies from their graves to be used in any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; or killing or otherwise hurting any person by such infernal arts,—should be guilty of felony without benefit of clergy, and suffer death." . . . These acts continued in force till lately, to the terror of all ancient females in the kingdom: and many poor wretches were sacrificed thereby to the prejudice of their neighbours and their own illusions; not a few having, by some means or other, confessed the fact at the gallows.—*Commentaries, Christian's edition*, book iv. chap. 4.

But the misdemeanor of persons pretending to use witchcraft, tell fortunes, or discover stolen goods by skill in the occult sciences, is still punished with a year's imprisonment; as it was formerly by standing four times in the pillory.

In Ireland there is still a statute, inflicting capital punishment upon witches, unrepealed. It was passed in the 28th Eliz., and it describes every species of the crime as minutely as the English statute 1 Jac. I. c. 12; and it even provides for the trial of peers who might happen to be charged with that crime.—*Ld. Mountmorres's Hist. Irish Parliament*.

A *précis* of "Witchcraft" Laws in England will be found in the *Curiosities of History*, p. 205.

"NOLO EPISCOPARI."

It is a prevailing vulgar Error that every bishop, before he accepts the bishopric which is offered to him, affects a maiden coyishness, and answers, *Nolo episcopari*. The origin of these words, and this notion (says Mr. Christian, in his notes to *Blackstone's Commentaries*), I have not been able to discover; the bishops certainly give no such refusal at present, and I am inclined to think they never did at any time in this country.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor ascribes these words to the *Roman Pontifical*. In his *Life of Christ*, he says: "It is lawful to desire a bishoprick; neither can the unwillingness to accept it be, in a prudent account, adjudged the aptest disposition to receive it (especially if done in ceremony—in *Pontifical. Rom.*)—just in the instant of their entertainment of it, and possibly after a long ambition."

But it has probably some better origin. Chamberlayne, in his *Present State of England*, describing "The Solemn Manner of making a Bishop," after mentioning the issue of the *congé-d'élire*, proceeds thus: "Then the dean summons a chapter, or assembly of the prebendaries, who either elect the person recommended by the king's letters, or show cause to the

* Addison, *Spectator*, No. 117.

contrary. Next the election is certified to the party elected, who doth modestly refuse it the first and second time; and if he doth refuse it a third time, then, that being certified to his majesty, another is recommended."

PRESENTATIONS TO LIVINGS.

Much Error prevails as to the right of purchasing Presentations to livings. The right of presenting may be purchased, but the exercise of the right for money is simoniacal. Hence, during a vacancy, the presentation cannot be sold; neither is it legal to buy the right of presenting a particular person. The right, whether of perpetual presentation, or of single presentation, must be conveyed absolutely and unconditionally, if conveyed at all.—*Bishop of Llandaff's Charge*, 1840.

BISHOPS' APRONS.

The black silk appendages worn in front by the bishops of the Church of England are called Aprons by uninformed laics.

This apron is nothing more than the short cassock, and is not peculiarly a part of the episcopal dress; for the practice of the bishops wearing it only demonstrates that they are attentive to the spirit of the 74th canon, which extends its obligation and forces its authority alike on the dignitary, the priest, and the deacon. The short cassock differs from the long one in its having no collar or sleeves, and in its extending only about two inches below the knees. It was so commonly used about a century ago, that there were then various kinds of them made; some adapted for riding, and others for walking. Fielding relates that Parson Adams both rode and walked in his, as occasion served. And Savage, in his satire, *The Progress of a Divine*, 1735, after describing his hero in his college progress, and taking his first degree, proceeds:

"Let testimonials then his worth disclose,
He gains a cassock, beaver, and a rose."

Archdeacon Sharp, commenting upon the 74th canon, says: "There are some parts of our peculiar dress which will at all times, and in all places, sufficiently distinguish us from laymen, and which may without the least inconvenience be worn on every occasion that calls us abroad, and even upon journeys: such badges of our order, for instance, as the band, hat-band, or *short cassock*; which latter I the rather mention here because it falls in with one of the directions in this canon, which is yet very practicable as well as decent, viz. '*uti ne in publicum nisi promissis vestibus induti prodeant*;' which '*promissæ vestes*' are interpreted in a marginal note by *cassocks*, and in the English version of the canon by a paraphrase, which implies a liberty of wearing them short."—*Notes and Queries*, 2d series, No. 47.

THE CATHOLIC AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The assumption by the Church of Rome of the term Catholic, *i. e.* whole, or universal, is thus exposed in Dr. Mant's valuable work, *Romanism and Holy Scripture compared*, page 65:

"The Church of Rome calls herself,—and it would be well if heedless

members of another church (whom she thereby condemns of heresy and schism) did not allow themselves to call her (and thus admit, in words, her pretensions, and join in her condemnation of themselves),—however, the Church of Rome calls herself ‘the Catholic Church;’ and asserts that ‘they who believe the Holy Catholic Church must necessarily believe that the doctrine propounded by her is that which was revealed by the Son of God.’ But the Church of Rome is not the Catholic or Universal Church, which consists of all the different particular churches scattered throughout the world. *One part* of this church she is, though one of the *most corrupted* parts of it; but she is no more the whole Catholic or Universal Church, according to Archbishop Secker’s apt illustration, ‘than one diseased limb, though perhaps the larger for being diseased, is the whole body of a man.’”

Hence the proper name is Roman Catholic Church.

PARSONS.

The term *Parson* is much more legitimate than is commonly supposed. “A parson (says Blackstone), *persona ecclesiæ*, is one that hath full possession of all the rights of a parochial church. He is called *parson* because by his person the church, which is an invisible body, is represented; and he is himself a body corporate, in order to protect and defend the rights of the church (which he personates) by a perpetual succession. He is sometimes called the rector or governor of the church; but the appellation of *parson* (however it may be depreciated by familiar, clownish, and indiscriminate use) is the most legal, most beneficial, and most honourable title that a parish-priest can enjoy.”

Though we write *Parson* differently, yet ’tis but *Person*; that is, the individual Person set apart for the service of such a church; and ’tis in Latin *Persona*, and *Personatus* is a Personage. Indeed, with the canon lawyers *Personatus* is any dignity or preferment in the church.

There never was a merry world since the fairies left dancing, and the parson left conjuring. The opinion of the latter kept thieves in awe, and did as much good in a country as a justice of peace.—*Selden’s Table-Talk*.

ENTRIES IN BIBLES.

As the Entries in family Bibles, prayer and other books, when made by a parent or head of a family, of births, marriages, deaths, and other circumstances happening within his own knowledge, are good evidences of such transactions, it is surprising that so little regard should be paid to the regular entries of events of so much importance. No search can be too earnest to discover the family Bible; for innumerable are the individuals in England not registered in the parochial book of Baptisms. Some parents are Roman Catholic or sectarian, some are too poor, some too careless, whilst others erroneously think that all is accomplished by half-baptism; and unless the Bibles or private manuscripts of both parties contain entries of their families, there may perhaps not be a single proof in existence by which their descents can be traced. Such also has been the

neglect which many of our parish-registers have suffered from political troubles during the time of Charles I., and from individual negligence since, that the utility of a family-register is often greater than there ought to be occasion for. At the Shrewsbury assizes, in 1834, a family Bible containing the plaintiff's pedigree was produced; and it was allowed to be read, the judge receiving it on the authority of the case *Doe dem.* Cleveland, York assizes. The memorandum had been written by one person, at one time. Although comprising the family events of nearly half a century, the entries were received as evidence. In the important case of *Hans v. Hastings*, argued in 1818, contesting the right to the earldom of Huntingdon, there was produced before the attorney-general, to whom the petitioner's claims were referred, a Bible from the Countess of Moira deceased, the heiress of the late Earl of Huntingdon, in which she stated that the petitioner's uncle, and, on failure of his issue male, the petitioner's father, was next heir to the earldom. This was received in evidence as good and sufficient proof of the various statements in the petitioner's pedigree.

WHO ARE ESQUIRES?

The present use of the distinction "Esquire" conveys not the remotest idea of its origin or appropriation in past ages. The esquire originated in chivalric times, when the sons of gentlemen, from the age of seven years, were brought up in the castles of superior lords; which was an inestimable advantage to the poorer nobility, who could hardly otherwise have given their children the accomplishments of their station. From seven to fourteen, these boys were called pages, or varlets; at fourteen they bore the name of Esquire. They were instructed in the management of arms, in the art of horsemanship, in exercises of strength and activity, so as to fit them for the tournament and the battle, and the milder glories of chivalrous gallantry. Long after the decline of chivalry, the word Esquire was only used in a limited sense for the sons of peers and knights, or such as obtained the title by creation or some other legal means. Blackstone defines esquires to be all who bear office or trust under the crown, and who are styled esquires by the king in their commissions and appointments; and being once honoured by the king with the title of esquire, they have a right to that distinction for life. These distinctions are now almost totally disregarded, and all gentlemen are generally termed esquires both in correspondence and in deeds; except solicitors and attorneys, who in course of business are called gentlemen.

A modern legal writer concludes an article of much research on this

subject by giving in a tabular form the different classes to whom only the title of Esquire strictly belongs. They are: 1. The sons of all the peers and lords of parliament. 2. Noblemen of all nations. 3. The sons of baronets, and the eldest sons of knights. 4. Persons to whom the queen gives arms by her own letters-patent, with the title Esquire. 5. Esquires of the Bath, and the eldest sons of those Esquires pursuant to the statutes of the order. 6. Barristers-at law by their office or profession. 7. Justices of the peace and mayors, while in the commission or in office. 8. Persons attending on the sovereign's coronation in some notable employment, or persons employed in any superior office of trust under the crown, or serving in some place of better note in the queen's household. 9. Persons who are styled Esquires by the queen in their patents, commissions, or appointments. 10. Attorneys in colonies, where the departments of counsel and attorneys are united.

THE PEERAGE.

Much has been said of the antiquity of the English Peerage, though it appears without the consideration that "the main body of the peerage are a modern nobility raised out of an ancient gentry. The description is, however, only accurate when the words are strictly confined to their English sense; for in the vocabularies of continental nations, the class whom we call '*gentry*' would be considered as a portion of the nobility."—*Sir James Mackintosh*.

CHANGE OF NAME.

The theory of the law is that surnames, like air or light, are *publici juris*, subjects in which even occupation and possession do not give exclusive property; the claim to bear peculiar cognisances or arms was, it is probable, in the origin of the practice similarly regarded. The assumption or change of a surname is at the present day, and has been always, notwithstanding a vulgar notion to the contrary, a matter of common-law right; nor is it restricted by any thing but the potent influence of public opinion, which has very properly always attached a certain degree of discredit to any attempt to confuse identity or obliterate the traces of a past career. Whenever, therefore, upon just cause a British subject seeks to take a surname not his by birth, he does so by following a course in itself of the highest authority and notoriety: he seeks and obtains a *Royal License* from the crown, or a special Act of Parliament. The former, the Royal License, is the proceeding now almost invariably had recourse to. To entitle a claimant to the grant of the Royal Sign-Manual for a change of name, cause must be shown that he is either a representative through female descent of the party whose surname he seeks, or else is a legatee in a will which enjoins the assumption. In England, all petitions for changes of names are referred by the Home Secretary to Garter King of Arms, and in Ireland to Ulster King of Arms. Those officers make, in each case, a report on the merits of the

claim. Petitions for changes of names are presented in England through the College of Arms, Doctors' Commons; and in Ireland, through Ulster's Office, Dublin Castle.

WEARING COCKADES.

It is difficult to ascertain the origin or to define the meaning of *the Cockade* as worn by gentlemen's servants. The most feasible suggestion is, that it was first adopted at the period of the wars of York and Lancaster, when the retainers of either party were known by the white or red roses borne in their caps. In after times, military and naval officers followed the practice, and designated their servants by the cockade, which has a certain resemblance to the old badge of the rose. At the present day, the right to wear a cockade seems to be confined to the servants of all those in any way connected with the army or navy, or the military or naval defence of the country; this latter class includes the militia, the lieutenant, the deputy-lieutenants, &c., of each county, and various other persons.

THE RED HAND OF ULSTER.

In an ancient expedition of some adventurers to Ireland, their leader declared that whoever first touched the shore should possess the territory which he reached. *O'Neil*, from whom descended the princes of Ulster, bent upon obtaining the reward, and seeing another boat likely to land, cut off his hand and threw it on the coast. Hence the traditionary origin of "The Red Hand of Ulster." "The Red Hand" was assigned by *King James I.* as the badge of the baronets: the design of the institution of the order being the colonisation of Ulster and Ireland, the arms of that province were deemed the most appropriate insignia.*

But there is a superstition connected with this honourable badge of baronetcy, which is too deeply rooted in the minds of the vulgar to be eradicated without great difficulty, as the following instance will show:

In *Notes and Queries*, N.S. No. 12, Mr. C. J. Douglas states, a villager of Hagley had gravely informed him that on account of the misdeeds of Thomas Lord Lyttelton (concerning whom the story is told that he foretold his own death, being informed thereof in a dream), the Lords Lyttelton were compelled to have "a bloody hand" in their arms; and that their arms being painted on a board, with the bloody hand very conspicuous thereon, were placed over the door of the hall; and it was added, that his lordship dared not remove it for twelve months. This board Mr. Douglas found was placed there just after the death of the late lord, and was nothing more or less than a hatchment. He was also told that the hand was to be smaller every generation, until it entirely disappeared.

* This and the two preceding articles, "Change of Name" and "Wearing Cockades," have been obligingly communicated by Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster.

SIGNATURE OF THE CROSS.

The mark which persons who are unable to write are required to make instead of their signature, is in the form of a cross (+); and this practice having formerly been followed by kings and nobles, is constantly referred to as an instance of the deplorable ignorance of ancient times. This signature is not, however, invariably a proof of such ignorance: anciently, the use of this mark was not confined to illiterate persons; for amongst the Saxons the mark of the cross, as an attestation of the good faith of the person signing, was required to be attached to the signature of those who could write, as well as to stand in the place of the signature of those who could not write. In those times, if a man could write, or even read, his knowledge was considered proof presumptive that he was in holy orders. The word *clericus*, or *clerk*, was synonymous with penman; and the laity, or people who were not clerks, did not feel any urgent necessity for the use of letters.

The ancient use of the cross was therefore universal, alike by those who could and those who could not write; it was, indeed, the symbol of an oath from its holy associations, and generally *the mark*. On this account Mr. Charles Knight, in his notes to the *Pictorial Shakspeare*, explains the expression of "God save the mark," as a form of ejaculation approaching to the character of an oath. This phrase occurs three or more times in the plays of Shakspeare; but hitherto it had been left by the commentators in its original obscurity.

LEGAL ERRORS.

It might be expected that the "uncertainty" of the Law would lead to many Errors and absurdities as to its provisions; and from a host of such baits for credulity we select these:

1. That if a Criminal has hung an hour and revives, he cannot afterwards be executed.

2. That it is necessary in some legal process against the sovereign to go through the fiction of arrest; which is done by placing a ribbon across the road, as if to impede the royal carriage.

3. That Deeds executed on a Sunday are void.

4. That Leases are made for the term of 999 years, because a lease of 1000 years would create a freehold.

5. That in order to disinherit an heir-at-law, it is necessary to give him a shilling by the will; for that otherwise he would be entitled to the whole property.

6. That a surgeon or butcher* (from the barbarity of their

* See "Butchers not Jurymen," in *Things not generally Known*, p. 175.

business) are ineligible as jurors. Part of this Error Barrington attributes to surgeons receiving protection and encouragement from a statute of the 5th of Henry VIII., which exempts them from an attendance upon juries; the object of which was doubtless that they might not be taken from their duties to their patients.

“A ridicule has been thrown upon surgeons from their having been incorporated formerly with barbers, from which union they have but within these few years separated themselves. The ridicule, however, arises from the change in the barber’s situation, and not that of the surgeon. Before the invention of perukes, barbers were not employed often in the low office of shaving; and as for the making of wigs, it is a branch of trade which hath no sort of connection with chirurgeons.”—*Observations on the more Ancient Statutes*, p. 423.

7. That the old statutes have prohibited the planting of vineyards, or the use of sawing-mills. Upon this last notion, now extinct and almost forgotten, Barrington, writing in the middle of the last century, conceived it “to have been occasioned by 5 and 6 Edw. VI. cap. 22, forbidding what are called *gig-mills*, and are supposed to be prejudicial to the woollen manufacture. There is likewise an Act of 23 Eliz. cap. 5, which prohibits any iron mills within two-and-twenty miles of London, to prevent the increasing dearness of wood for fuel. As for sawing-mills, I cannot find any statute which relates to them; and they are established in Scotland, to the very great advantage of both the proprietors and the public.” We are inclined to attribute this assumed illegality of saw-mills to the absurd prejudice that they would prove disadvantageous to the working-classes, by substituting machinery for manual labour.* The second saw-mill constructed in England, about the year 1767, was, indeed, destroyed by a misguided mob.

8. That pounds of butter may be any number of ounces.

9. That bull-beef should not be sold unless the bull have been baited previously to being killed.

DEAD LAWS.

Laws made on the spur of the occasion should have a short and limited duration, otherwise in the course of years it will be said, “*magis sæculum suum sapiunt, quàm rectam rationem.*” Obsolete and useless statutes should be repealed; for they debilitate the authority of such as still exist and are necessary. Neglect on this point is well compared by Lord Bacon to Mezentius, who left the living to perish in the arms of the dead. And on the prompting of Bacon, James I. said to his parliament:

* Dr. Rawlinson, in his additions to Aubrey’s *Surrey* (written in 1719), imagines Belvidere Gardens, Lambeth, to have been the site of a *saw-mill* erected in Cromwell’s time, and which he protected by Act of Parliament.—*Curiosities of London*, p. 438.

“There be in the common law divers contrary reports and precedents; and this corruption doth likewise concern the statutes and acts of parliament, in respect that there are divers cross and cuffling statutes, and some so penned as they may be taken in divers, yea, contrary senses; and therefore would I wish both those statutes and reports, as well in the parliament as common law, to be at once maturely reviewed and reconciled; and that not only all contrarieties should be scraped out of our books, but even that such penal statutes as were made but for the use of the time which do not agree with the condition of this our time ought likewise to be left out of our books. And this reformation might, methinks, be made a worthy work, and well deserves a parliament to be sat of purpose for doing it.”

By the Act 19 and 20 Vic. cap. 64, one hundred and eighteen statutes, most of them obsolete but hitherto unrepealed, were swept away. They commence with the 13 Edw. I. cap. 33, enacting that “lands where crosses be set shall be forfeited as lands aliened in mortmain;” and extend to the 17th Geo. III. cap. 42, “for preventing abuses in the making and vending bricks and tiles.” Many of them are curious: the 25th Edward III. chap. 22 enacts that he who purchaseth a provision in Rome for an abbey shall be out of the king’s protection. The act of 7th Richard II. chap. 13 prohibits any man from “riding in harness within the realm, or with ‘launcegays.’” The 13th Richard II. tampers with the wages of labourers and the gains of victuallers. One provides that “arrow-heads shall be well-boiled, brassed, and hard;” others define “who only may wear another’s livery,” and “what sort of Irishmen only may dwell in England.” One forbids any strangers to buy “English horns unwrought, gathered, or growing in London, or within twenty-four miles thereof.” Another is “an act made and ordained to destroy choughs, crows, and rooks.” Other statutes regulate and provide for the legal receipts of hostlers for oats; the coinage of the realm; the gilding of silver; the penalty for dwelling in the “stews” of Southwark; the stuffing of bolsters, feather-beds, and pillows; the making of cables; the number of sheep that a man may keep; the breed of horses; the abstinence from flesh in Lent; the putting away of images and divers books; the redress of certain abuses and deceits practised in paintings, &c. There are also sundry absurd laws passed in the reign of James I. concerning the true making of certain articles of wearing-apparel, the length of kersies, and other singular matters. An act of 22 Henry VIII. is “concerning outlandish people calling themselves Egyptians;” and 8 Eliz. c. 10 is “an act for bowyers and the prices of bows.”

Domestic History.

WHO WAS ROBIN HOOD ?

THE first distinct mention of Robin Hood is by Fordun, the Scottish historian, who wrote in the fourteenth century. He says : " There arose among the disinherited the famous brigand Robert Hode, with his accomplices, whom the common people are so fond of celebrating in their games and stage-plays ; and whose exploits, chanted by strolling ballad-singers, delight them above all things." Upon these ballads, adapting themselves generation by generation to the changes of language, rests the only historical evidence of the individuality of Robin Hood, beyond this mention by Fordun. A theory has been set up by some enthusiastic interpreters of song and legend, that Robin Hood and Little John, and many a nameless outlaw, were great heroes, who had been defeated with Simon de Montfort at the battle of Evesham, in 1265. Others make Robin Hood to have been an Earl of Huntingdon. He is the Saxon yeoman, Locksley, of Sir Walter Scott. According to Thierry, the whole of the band that ranged the vast woodland districts of Derby, Nottingham, and Yorkshire, were the remnants of the old Saxon race, who had lived in this condition of defiance to Norman oppression from the time of Hereward ; the same type of generous robbers and redressers of wrongs as the famous Cumberland bandits, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Cloudesley.

Mr. Charles Knight, in his *Popular History of England*, accepts Robin Hood as a real personage, and considers that there may have been a succession of Robin Hoods during the long term of Norman tyranny ; but whoever he was and in whatever reign he lived, Robin Hood is the representative of a never-ending protest of the people against misrule. In the Robin-Hood ballads, the detestation of the oppressors was long kept alive ; and having put aside the exaggeration of these ballads, we feel that we are in the natural regions of poetry, surrounded by adventures that might have been real and by men that have human hearts in their bosoms when we read of the stories of " the gentlest thief that ever was." Fuller, who places Robin Hood amongst his " Worthies," says : " Know, reader, he is entered on our catalogue, not for his thievery, but for his gentleness."—See *Curiosities of History*, p. 220.

WHO WAS GUY FAWKES?

Guido, or Guy Fawkes, was a gentleman of good family and respectable parentage in Yorkshire. His father, Edward Fawkes, was a notary at York, and held the office of Registrar and Advocate of the Consistory Court of the cathedral church there. Edward Fawkes died in 1578, leaving a son, Guy, and two daughters. There is reasonable evidence to show that Guy Fawkes received his early education in a free school near the city of York. His mother having married a member of a zealous Roman Catholic family a few years after his father's death, he probably became an inmate of his stepfather's house from that time, and would naturally be brought up in his stepfather's religion. Having spent the small property which he inherited from his father, he enlisted as a soldier of fortune in the Spanish army in Flanders, and was present at the taking of Calais by the Archduke Albert in 1598. He was well known to the English, and had been despatched by Sir William Stanley and Owen, from Flanders, to join Christopher Wright on his embassy to Philip II. immediately after Queen Elizabeth's death. His society is stated to have been "sought by all the most distinguished in the archduke's camp for nobility and virtue." If this account of his character is correct, we are to look upon this man, not according to the popular notion as a mercenary ruffian, ready for hire to perform the chief part in any tragedy of blood, but as an enthusiast whose understanding had been distorted by superstition, and in whom fanaticism had conquered the better feelings of nature. His language and conduct after the discovery of the plot are characteristic of a resolute fanatic, acting upon perverted notions of right and wrong, but by no means destitute of piety or humanity.—*Jardine's Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot.*

MEDIÆVAL OR MIDDLE AGES.

The Rev. J. G. Dowling, in his *Introduction to the Critical Study of Ecclesiastical History*, fixes upon the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451, as the commencement of the Mediæval or Middle Ages, which he thinks ended with the revival of classical literature in the fifteenth century: "that age of transition and revolution, combining in itself several of the most striking characteristics of the two states of society between which it forms the interval."

EFFECTS OF PRINTING.

Many persons, in their affection for works of antiquity, are apt to rate the present generation for their neglect of ancient art, or their depreciation of its labours; forgetting that the

ingenuity of man is accomplishing greater wonders by other means. This position may be illustrated by a note in Sir Charles Bell's *Bridgewater Treatise*. Speaking of that grand revolution which took place when language, till then limited to its proper organ, had its representation in the work of the hand, Sir Charles says :

“ Now that a man of mean estate can have a library of more intrinsic value than that of Cicero, when the sentiments of past ages are as familiar as those of the present, and the knowledge of different empires is transmitted and common to all, we cannot expect to have our sages followed, as of old, by their five thousand scholars. Nations will not now record their acts by building pyramids, or by consecrating temples and raising statues, once the only means of perpetuating great deeds or extraordinary virtues. It is vain that our artists complain that patronage is withheld ; for the ingenuity of the hand has at length subdued the arts of design—printing has made all other records barbarous, and great men build for themselves a ‘ live-long monument.’ ”

Yet Howell observes, in one of his *Familiar Letters*, date 1646 : “ Nor did the art of printing much avail the Christian commonwealth ; but may be said to be well near as fatal as gunpowder, which came up in the same age.”

THE NINE OF DIAMONDS THE CURSE OF SCOTLAND.

The origin of this evil repute has been much controverted. Singer, in his work on *Playing Cards*, says this card was named from every ninth monarch of Scotland being a bad king ; and not, as generally supposed, because the Duke of Cumberland, the night before the battle of Culloden, accidentally wrote his orders for refusing quarter upon the back of the card ; and the nine of diamonds appears in a print of curses, &c., dated some months previous to the battle of Culloden.

Another cause assigned is, that the nine lozenges with which the saltire is charged in the armorial bearings of the Earl of Stair, are so arranged as to resemble the nine of diamonds, which was called “ The Curse of Scotland ” from the active part taken by that nobleman in the Union, which was most unpopular in Scotland.—*Edw. Hawkins ; Notes and Queries*, No. 4.

Again, it is said that the similarity of the nine of diamonds to St. Andrew's Cross led to its being called the “ Cross of Scotland,” which in the Scotch pronunciation became “ curse ; ” but the nine of any other suit would be equally applicable.

The explanation is stated to be found in the game of Pope Joan, in which the nine of diamonds is the pope ; and the well-known anti-papal spirit of the Scottish church caused the pope to be called the Curse of Scotland.—*Notes and Queries*, No. 63.

The nine of diamonds was the great winning-card at Comette, game introduced into Scotland by the French attendants of

Mary of Lorraine, queen of James V., and the ruin of many Scotch families.—*Gent. Mag.* vol. lvi. p. 968.

ORIGIN OF THE STORY OF BLUEBEARD.

It is (says Dr. Cooke Taylor) a very common but a very erroneous opinion, that the legend of Bluebeard was devised by the Roman Catholics as a satire on Henry VIII., and that its object was to strengthen the indignation with which his cruelty to his wives was viewed throughout Europe. There is nothing in the legend which can afford the slightest support to such a theory; neither is there any authority for making Bluebeard a Turk. The manners which the story portrays describe a state of society long anterior to the age of the Tudors; they belong to a time when the murder of wives needed not to shelter itself under the form of law: the hero is not a king feeling something of the control which nascent public opinion imposes upon despotism; he is the castellan of the darkest period of the middle ages, when the only check on the tyranny of the lords of the castles was the chance of their being called to account by some adventurous knight-errant, who undertook to redress grievances by the point of his lance and the edge of his sword. The most telling incident in the story—the look-out of sister Anne from the tower of the castle—evidently fixes the date in the age of knight-errantry; Bluebeard is clearly one of those terrible burgraves whom Victor Hugo has so vividly delineated, or, as seems to be probable, he is

“Knight of the shire, and represents them all.”

In fact, there are few countries in western Europe which do not claim the equivocal honour of having produced a Bluebeard; and we may regard the tale as a kind of concentrated essence of several legends and traditions relating to outrages perpetrated by feudal lords during the feeble stage of monarchy, when, to use the expressive language of the sacred historian, it might be said of almost every country in western Europe, “At this time there was no king in Israel; every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes.” Several strange local legends have been brought to light, which throw some gleams of explanation on the tales that have become current in European tradition. Several of these relate to a supposed prototype of Bluebeard; and it will not be uninteresting to glance at the real history of some of these personages, as illustrative of the state of society in that age of chivalry, the disappearance of which is so deeply lamented by certain writers of sentimental romance. After giving an outline of three of the legends alluded to, Dr. Taylor observes: “We think that traces of these three legends may be found in Perrault’s story of Bluebeard; and that instead of having based his fiction on a single tradition, he endeavor

to make it a kind of *résumé* of the many legends of tyrannical husbands with which the popular literature of France abounds."

One of the versions relates that Bluebeard was no other than Gilles Marquis de Laval, a brave marshal of France in the reigns of Charles VI. and VII. His revenues were princely : wherever he went, he had in his suite a seraglio, a company of actors, a band of musicians, a society of sorcerers, a great number of cooks, packs of dogs, and above two hundred led horses. Mezeray states that he maintained sorcerers to discover hidden treasures, and corrupted young persons of both sexes that he might attach them to him, and afterwards killed them for the sake of their blood, which was necessary for his charms and incantations. He was at length, for a state-crime against the Duke of Brittany, strangled and burnt in a field at Nantes, in 1440.

FRIAR BACON'S BRAZEN HEAD.

This widely-known legend has little to do with the veritable history of Roger or Friar Bacon, the greatest of English philosophers before the time of his celebrated namesake ; though he, Roger Bacon, is more popularly known by this fictitious name than by his real merit. In a rare tract, entitled *The Famous Historie of Friar Bacon*, 4to, Lond. 1652, it is pretended he discovered, "after great study," that if he could succeed in making a head of brass which should speak and hear it when it spoke, he might be able to surround all England with a wall of brass. By the assistance of Friar Bungay, and a devil likewise called into the consultation, he accomplished his object, but with this drawback—the head, when finished, was warranted to speak in the course of one month ; but it was quite uncertain when ; and if they heard it not before it had done speaking, all their labour would be lost. After watching for three weeks, fatigue got the mastery over them, and Bacon set his man Miles to watch, with strict injunctions to awake them if the head should speak. The fellow heard the head at the end of one half-hour say, "Time is ;" at the end of another, "Time was ;" and at the end of another half-hour, "Time's past ;" when down it fell with a tremendous crash ; but the blockhead of a servant thought that his master would be angry if he disturbed him for such trifles ! "And hereof came it," says the excellent Robert Recorde, "that fryer Bacon was accompted so greate a negromancier, whiche never used that arte (by any conjecture that I can fynde), but was in geometrie and other mathematicall sciences so experte, that he coulde doe by them suche thynges as were wonderful in the sight of most people."

Bacon died at Oxford in 1292 ; where existed, nearly until our own times, a traditional memorial of "the wonderful Doctor," as he was styled by some of his contemporaries. On Grandpont, or the Old Folly Bridge, at the southern entrance into Oxford, stood a tower called "Friar Bacon's Study," from a belief that the philosopher was accustomed to ascend this build-

ing in the night and "study the stars." It was entirely demolished in 1778. Of the bridge, Wood says, "No record can resolve its precise beginning."

POSTAGE ENVELOPES.

These are by no means an invention of our time, as they are commonly thought to be.

M. Piron tells us that the idea of a post-paid Envelope originated early in the reign of Louis XIV. with M. de Velaye, who in 1658 established (with royal approbation) a private penny-post, placing boxes at the corners of streets for the reception of letters wrapped up in envelopes, which were to be bought at offices established for that purpose. M. de Velaye also caused to be printed certain forms of *billets* or notes, applicable to the ordinary business among the inhabitants of great towns, with blanks, which were to be filled up by the pen with such special matter as might complete the writer's object. One of these *billets* has been preserved to our time. Pelisson, Madame de Sevigné's friend, and the object of the bon-mot that "he abused the privilege which men have of being ugly," was amused at this kind of skeleton correspondence; and under the affected name of Pisandre, he filled up and addressed one of these forms to the celebrated Mdle. de Scuderi in her *pseudonyme* of Sappho. This strange *billet-doux* is still extant; one of the oldest, we presume, of penny-post letters, and a curious example of a prepaying envelope.—*Quarterly Review*, No. 128.

HACKNEY-COACHES.

Coaches were first let for hire in London in 1625, and were hence called hackney-coaches. That they were named from being first employed in conveying the citizens to their villas at Hackney is a popular error, though supported by Maitland. The term is said to be from the French *haquenée*, a slow-paced or ambling nag; as, "he had in his stable an *hackenay*."—(Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*.) But *haquenée* "does not include the idea of hiring. To hack is to offer a thing for common sale or hire; and a coach (along with the horses) kept for hire is a hackney-coach."—(David Booth's *Analytical Dictionary*, p. 304.) Still the term *hackney*, as applied to a *hireling*, may be traced to a very remote origin, and was certainly used in its present sense long before the village of Hackney became wealthy or populous.

Hackney-coaches were first excluded from Hyde Park in 1695, when "several persons of quality having been affronted at the Ring by some of the persons that rode in hackney-coaches with masks, and complaint thereof being made to the Lord-Justices, an order is made that no hackney-coaches be permitted to go into the said park, and that none presume to appear there in masks."—(*Post-Boy*, June 8, 1695.) And the exclusion continues to this day.

Miscellanea.

THE NATIONAL DEBT.

It is a very erroneous notion to suppose that the property of the kingdom is increased by National Debts, contracted in consequence of the expenses of war. On the contrary, the principal of the Debt is the exact amount of the property which the nation has lost from its capital for ever. The American War cost the nation 116,000,000 sterling; and the effect is precisely the same as if so much of its wealth and treasure in corn, cattle, cloth, ammunition, coin, &c., had been collected together and thrown into the sea, besides the loss accruing from the destruction of many of its most productive hands. When this property is consumed, it never can be retrieved, though industry and care may acquire and accumulate new stores. Such a supply, by no mode of taxation that has yet been devised could be collected at once without exhausting the patience and endurance of the people. But by the method of funding the subjects are inclined to suppose that this suffering consists only in the payment of the yearly interest of this immense waste. The ruin is completed before the interest commences, for that is paid by the nation to the nation, and returns back to its former channel and circulation; like the balls in a tennis-court, however they may be tossed from one side to the other, their sum and quantity within the court continue the same.

The extravagance of individuals suggested the system of funding the public debts. When a man cannot satisfy the immediate demands of his creditors, it is an obvious expedient to give him a promissory note to pay him at a future day, with interest for the time; and this is an assignable note, so that the creditor may be able to persuade another to advance him the principal and to stand in his place: it is exactly similar to the debts or securities of government, except that in general they are not payable at any definite time. All debts, when no effects remain, both in public and private, are certain evidences of the waste and consumption of so much property, which nothing can restore, though frugality and industry may alleviate the future consequences. When a debt is contracted, a man is not richer for paying it: if he owes one hundred pounds, and pays interest for it, he is in no degree richer by calling in one hundred pounds, from which he receives interest, and therewith discharging the

debt; but probably if he does so he will find himself more comfortable and independent, and will find his credit higher if his occasions should oblige him to borrow in future. So it is with governments: when the debt is contracted, and the money spent, the mischief is done. The discharge of the debt can add nothing (or little comparatively) immediately to the stock or capital of the nation. But yet these important consequences may be expected from it: viz. from the abolition of taxes upon candles, soap, salt, beer, and upon a melancholy catalogue of the necessary articles of life,—taxes which take from those who have nothing to spare,—the price of labour would be lowered, manufactures would flourish with renewed vigour, the minds of the people would be cheered, and the nation would again have credit and spirit to meet its most formidable enemies, and to repel and resent both injury and insult.—*Christian's Notes to Blackstone's Commentaries.*

CHEAP INSURANCES.

It is a fallacy to suppose that a reduction of a few shillings per cent in the premium can be of any advantage to the insured, more especially when there is a participation in the profits; while it operates as a serious drawback on the profits of the office, and consequently of the insured also. The higher the premium, and the stricter the caution in taking none but good lives, the larger will be the profits to be divided.

Some insurance-offices hold out to their subscribers a certainty of numerical profit; but these attempts will cease when it shall come to be clearly understood that *in every office some must pay more than they receive, in order that others may receive more than they pay.*—*Quarterly Review.*

OBJECTIONS TO LIFE ASSURANCE.

It is scarcely worth while to enter into an argument with persons who object to all Life Assurance as a species of gambling; nor with those who, looking to the incorrect phrase, lose sight of what is really meant, and prose about impious interference with the *fiat* of Providence. There is, however, a more business-like class who object to the plan. These contend that if the annual sums paid by the assured as premiums were put out at compound interest, the produce would exceed what the insured, or his representatives, will receive from the office. This is looking at the subject in a very narrow and mistaken point of view: it supposes life certain to a given extent.

GAME OF "BEGGAR-MY-NEIGHBOUR."

"I cannot call to mind (says '*The Doctor*') any thing which

is estimated so much below its deserts as the game of Beggar-my-Neighbour. It is generally thought fit only for the youngest children, or for the lowest and most ignorant of persons into whose hands a pack of cards can descend ; whereas there is no game whatever in which such perpetual opportunities of calculation are afforded to the scientific gamester ; not indeed for playing his cards, but for betting upon them. Zerah Colburn, George Bidder, and Professor Airy, would find their faculties upon the stretch, were they to attempt to keep pace with its chances.

“It is, however, necessary that the reader should not mistake the spurious for the genuine game ; for there are various modes of playing it, and, as in all cases, only one which is the orthodox way. You take up trick by trick. The trump, as at other games, takes every other suit. If suit is not followed, the leader wins the trick ; but if it is, the highest card is the winner. These rules being observed (I give them because they will not be found in Hoyle), the game is regular, and affords combinations worthy to have exercised the power of that calculating machine of flesh and blood called Jedediah Buxton.”

MENTAL EDUCATION.

Professor Faraday, in a paper read to the Royal Institution, has ably illustrated the lamentable deficiency of judgment among what may be considered the educated classes of the present day, as exemplified in the belief in table-turning and other mania of this class. It will no less serve as an illustration of the extent to which minds not well regulated may be led astray, and as a warning against hastily drawing conclusions without a careful examination of the phenomena, especially when those conclusions are opposed to laws founded on the most careful investigations of the phenomena of nature by men of the highest scientific attainments.

To guard against these erroneous conclusions, the importance of self-culture for preparing the mind for the exercise of correct judgment, and the necessity of accumulating facts and observations, and then accustoming the mind to reason upon them and to deduce conclusions from a great variety of well-established data, can scarcely be overrated.

Next were exhibited several experiments, for the purpose of showing how easily any one might be misled into false conclusions by the results of single experiments, and the necessity of accumulating facts in different ways before any sound judg-

ment can be formed. Faraday alluded particularly to Arago's discovery of the influence on a suspended magnet of a rotating disc of metal immediately beneath. No sooner was the phenomenon made known than numerous explanations of the cause were advanced by various persons without due consideration; but whilst they were so ready with their explanations, Arago himself was silent. The discoverer of the effect abstained from assigning any cause, for he felt that he was not in possession of sufficient facts to enable him to form a correct judgment; and it was not till some time after others had assumed a variety of erroneous causes that he was led to the conclusion that the effect was due to the excitement of electric currents. Professor Faraday reverted from time to time to the table-turning delusion and to spirit-rapping as evidence of the ill-regulated condition of the public mind; and he denied the right of those who adduced phenomena opposed to the recognised laws of nature to demand an explanation of the cause from others. If asked to explain all the phenomena, he would not undertake to do so, any more than he could explain all the tricks of a conjuror; but because he did not know the cause, he was not to assume that the laws of nature were suspended or reversed. In the self-culture of the mind, humility is essentially requisite; for without a full conviction of the liability to err, there would not be that painstaking so necessary to the discovery of truth. The little attention that is generally paid to cultivate the judgment was alluded to in conclusion, as one of the anomalies of this educational age; for whilst a large portion of time is frequently devoted to acquiring an indifferent knowledge of a mechanical musical instrument, that infinitely superior instrument, the mind, is generally neglected.

PRIORITY OF INVENTION.

The following opinion by an eminent philosopher, Sir David Brewster, deserves attentive consideration in reference to a subject of frequent dispute:

“Scientific men have very often, at the same time perfectly independently of each other, arrived at the same stage of progress which has arisen from previous steps that have been published; but if a man arrives at one of those steps, and does not think that that step is of any value, and therefore does not claim the idea to himself—and if another man afterwards has arrived at the same idea, and makes use of that idea for the benefit of the public—I hold that the right of the first man, whatever it may have been, is extinguished, and that he is not entitled under these circumstances to come forward and oppose the claim of another. There are many instances of things being kept secret and not published. In the case of the achromatic telescope, it

was invented by a country gentleman of the name of Hall, who did not choose to take out a patent, but put the instrument into his drawer. Mr. Dolland got a patent for it afterwards. This instrument was found after the death of Mr. Hall to be the real achromatic telescope. It was decided that Mr. Dolland's patent was not vitiated by the previous discovery of Mr. Hall, who had not made it public. Mr. Hall was a man in a good position in society, and I suppose a man of some wealth ; and therefore, I presume, it could not be the expense of the patent which deterred him. Had he been a poor man, I should have inferred that it was the expense of the patent, and the risk of not being able to secure his property in the invention, which deterred him."

COMMON CAUSE OF FAILURE OF MACHINES.

Professor Willis, in a lecture delivered to the Society of Arts on the Results of the Great Exhibition of 1851, observes :

To perfect and to reduce to practice the idea of a new machine is no light effort of the intellect ; and in proportion to the education of the inventor, so will his steps be rendered surer, more direct, and more rapid. As far as the relative motions of the parts of his machine are concerned, his natural faculties may carry him, and probably suggest a variety of constructive methods and cunning devices by which these may be effected ; but in the next place it becomes necessary to select from these the most appropriate to sustain the forces and resistances,—to estimate the strength to be given to the different parts, their proper qualities of weight, of lightness and stiffness, the amount of friction, and a variety of other complex conditions, which can only be determined by statical or dynamical knowledge, but which are necessary to ensure the durability, easy and economical working, and practical value of the contrivance. In the absence of the proper technical knowledge of theoretical mechanics, the proposed machine, if it possess any value, will only arrive at its perfect and permanent form through a series of abortive attempts, which, by a succession of failures and repairs, may perhaps lead to the removal of the weak points of the contrivance. Those parts which by chance were made unnecessarily strong and heavy, will probably retain their original errors. The representations of machines and engines in the collections published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries furnish abundant illustration of these remarks. In all that belongs to the mere motion of these contrivances, the greatest possible ingenuity and fertility of invention is displayed. But in all that concerns construction, framing, and adaptation of form and dimensions to resistances, strains, and the nature of the work, a total absence of principle and experience is manifested, so that it is apparent that these machines would act very well in the form of models, but that, if actually set to work, the most of them would knock themselves to pieces in a very short time.

SAFETY OF LEANING TOWERS.

There are certain structures in the world which have lost their perpendicularity, but remain secure because the line of their centre of gravity remains within the base. The famous

marble tower of Pisa is thought to have been built intentionally inclining, to frighten and surprise; it is 130 feet high, and overhangs its base 16 feet. Sir John Leslie used to attribute the stability of this tower to the cohesion of mortar being sufficient to maintain it erect, in spite of its being *out* of the condition required by physics; to wit, that "in order that a column should stand, a perpendicular let fall from the centre of gravity must fall within the base." Sir John described the tower of Pisa to be in violation of this principle; but, from designs shown on the spot, the perpendicular *does* fall within the base. At Bologna also are two "leaning towers," one of which, "the Asinelli," is 350 feet high, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet out of the perpendicular. The other, the Garisenda, is about 130 feet high, and inclines 8 feet from the perpendicular. Montfaucon attributes the leaning of these towers to the sinking of the earth. He says, from examination, that when the Garisenda tower bowed a great part of it went to ruin, because the ground that the inclined side stood on was not so firm as the other, "which may be said of all other towers that lean so."

The London Monument inclines so much that timid persons sometimes doubt its stability, and many years since its fall was a point of discussion. It was at first used by the Fellows of the Royal Society for astronomical observations, but was abandoned on account of its *vibrations* being too great for the nicety required. This occasioned a report that the Monument was unsafe: "but," says Elmes, "its scientific construction may bid defiance to the attacks of all but earthquakes for centuries." The more recent fear of its instability was therefore only a revival of this alarm, which probably obtained some credence among weak persons from its being erroneously attributed to Fellows of the Royal Society.

FALL OF A GUINEA AND FEATHER.

A large body, or mass of many atoms, naturally falls with the same velocity as a smaller body or a single atom; for gravity pulls equally at each atom, and must overcome its inertia equally whether it be alone or with others. This remark contradicts the popular opinion, that a large and heavy body should fall to the earth much faster than a small and light one; an opinion which has arisen from constantly seeing such contrasts as the rapid fall of a gold coin and the slow descent of a feather. The true cause of the contrast is, that the atoms of the feather are much spread out, so as to be more resisted by the air than those of the gold. If the two be let fall together in a vessel from which the air has been extracted, as in the common air-pump experiments, they arrive at the bottom in exactly the same time; and even in the air, if the coin be hammered out

into gold leaf, it will fall still more slowly than the feather.—
Arnott's Elements of Physics.

EXISTENCE OF MAN UPON THE EARTH.

Men are in the habit of measuring the greatness and the wisdom of the universe by the duration and the profit which it promises to their own race ; but the past history of the earth already shows what an insignificant moment the duration of the existence of our race upon it constitutes. A Nineveh vessel, a Roman sword, awakes in us the conception of gray antiquity. What the museums of Europe show us of the remains of Egypt and Assyria we gaze upon with silent astonishment, and despair of being able to carry our thoughts back to a period so remote. Still must the human race have existed for ages, and multiplied itself, before the pyramids or Nineveh could have been erected. We estimate the duration of human history at 6000 years ; but immeasurable as this time may appear to us, what is it in comparison with the time during which the earth carried successive series of rank plants and mighty animals, and no men ; during which in our neighbourhood the amber-tree bloomed, and dropped its costly gum on the earth and in the sea ; when, in Siberia, Europe, and North America, groves of tropical palms flourished ; where gigantic lizards, and after them elephants, whose mighty remains we still find buried in the earth, found a home ? Different geologists, proceeding from different premises, have sought to estimate the duration of the above creative period, and vary from a million to nine million years. And the time during which the earth generated organic beings is again small when we compare it with the ages during which the world was a ball of fused rocks. For the duration of its cooling from 2000° to 200° Centigrade, the experiments of Bishop upon basalt show that about 350 millions of years would be necessary. And with regard to the time during which the first nebulous mass condensed into our planetary system, our most daring conjectures must cease. The history of man, therefore, is but a short ripple in the ocean of time. For a much longer series of years than that during which man has already occupied this world the existence of the present state of inorganic nature favourable to the duration of man seems to be secured, so that for ourselves and for long generations after us we have nothing to fear. But the same forces of air and water, and of the volcanic interior, which produced former geological revolutions, and buried one series of living forms after another, act still upon the earth's crust. They more probably will bring about the last day of the human race than those distant cosmical alterations of which we have spoken, and perhaps force us to make way for new and more complete living forms, as the

lizards and the mammoth have given place to us and our fellow-creatures which now exist.—*Prof. Helmholtz (of Königsberg) on the Interaction of Natural Forces.*

HEMP PROPHECY.

The disinclination of our forefathers to cultivate hemp, or as they spelt it *Hempe*, gave rise to a curious distich : “ When once hempe is spun, England’s done.” Lord Bacon notices this popular saying, which afterwards became a prophecy in ages of superstition. This prophecy was supposed to have been fulfilled at the accession of James I., by the decease of all the sovereigns whose names began with all these ominous letters, viz. Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, Philip (her Spanish husband), and Elizabeth. When they had expired “ England was done” of course, because James was a Scotch king.

PREJUDICES AGAINST EATING FISH.

A contemporary tourist (Mr. Leitch Ritchie) observes, there is a peculiarity of taste in certain fishing districts, which makes the people poorer than they need be. “ On the banks of the Seine, for instance, the fishermen are compelled to eat the John Dorys themselves, or else to throw them away ; for this fish, so excellent and so wholesome, is not admitted on the tables of the genteel, and therefore fetches only a few centimes in the market. In England, we understand good eating better at least in this respect, and very properly place the vulgar John Dory on a par with turbot. We should not forget to add, that in some parts of Ireland—for instance, in the county of Sligo—the skate is reckoned unfit for human food. The starving peasant turns away from it with contempt ; and when taken accidentally, either by the rich or poor, it is thrown back into the sea. The same prejudice prevails to a certain extent in Scotland ; while in London we meet with portions of the elsewhere proscribed, and really excellent fish, at the tables of the opulent.”

WHITEBAIT.

Whitebait was formerly considered to be the young of the Shad ; but, in an article in the *Zoological Journal*, No. 19, this doctrine is combated by Mr. William Yarrell, F.L.S., who was led to investigate the subject by observing the early appearance (March) of Whitebait in a fishmonger’s shop ; and knowing that Shads, which they were supposed to be, did not make their appearance till much later (May), he took up and persevered in a course of investigation, which lasted from March to August 1828. The specific distinction between the two fishes, on which he relies as of the greatest value, is the difference of

their anatomical character; and especially in their number of vertebræ, or small bones, extending from the back-bone. "The number of vertebræ in the Shad," he states, "of whatever size the specimen may be, is invariably fifty-five, the number in the Whitebait is uniformly fifty-six; and even in a fish of two inches, with the assistance of a lens, this exact number may be distinctly made out."

FALSE APPETITE.

A false appetite, a craving that does not arise from the demands of health, but from the morbid piquancy of the juices in the stomach, is a state in which more is taken than can be digested—the food being devoured rather than eaten.

This condition of the stomach has led to the notion that the parties have had to feed another animal besides themselves; and the uneducated do not hesitate to believe that a large worm, and even a wolf, are occasionally inhabitants of that viscus.*

HOPS AND COALS NUISANCES.

Walter Blythe, in his *Improver Improved*, published in 1649, has a chapter upon improvements by plantations of Hops, which has the following striking passage. He observes that

"Hops were then grown to be a national commodity; but that it was not many years since the famous city of London petitioned the Parliament of England against two nuisances: and these were, Newcastle coals, in regard to their stench, &c.; and hops, in regard they would *spoil the taste of drink*, and endanger the people. And had the Parliament been no wiser than they, we had been in a measure pined, and in a great measure starved; which is just answerable to the principles of those men who cry down all devices or ingenious discoveries as projects, and thereby stifle and choak improvements."

The force of prejudice in the price of Farnham hops, though nothing but a hedge parts them from another parish as well cultivated, is very great. A higher price is always given at Weyhill fair, the great mart for hops in this part of the kingdom, for those of the growth of the parish of Farnham than for any other.—*Manning and Bray's Surrey*, vol. iii. p. 125.

RATIONALE OF COOKERY.

"Taste and try" will alone ensure success in cookery; and a few years' experience is better than a volume upon the art. A medical man once asked Ude why cooks had not weights and measures, as apothecaries; to which Ude replied: "Because we taste our recipes, whereas doctors seldom taste those they

* In India is found a plant, a species of hellebore (not the hellebore of the druggists), a portion of which being taken medicinally by persons so afflicted with dyspepsia as to reject all food will cause the appetite to return. This plant is called by the natives "the Indian's root."

are mixing; wherefore they must have exact measures." Dr. A. Hunter acknowledges: "I was once so presumptive as to suppose that the seasoning might be weighed out after the manner directed by physicians in their prescriptions, but I soon found that my plan was too mechanical. I have therefore abandoned it, and now freely give to the cooks the exercise of their right in all matters that regard the kitchen."—*Receipts in Modern Cookery*.

EPICURISM AND EPICUREANS.

Lady Blessington notes: "Let me efface the first term, Epicurism, which is so injuriously and so falsely applied to the philosopher from whom it takes its name; and let me not confound his refined moral system with the indulgence in sensual enjoyments of those professing themselves Epicureans. I have never without indignation heard the term applied since I read Browne's *Inquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*; and yet I was about to use it in this injurious sense, so prone are we to continue in errors we have once believed. But how many of our opinions are founded on equally erroneous premises!"

CONVERSATIONAL STYLE.

When the meaning is too big for the words, the expression is quaint. When the words are too big for the meaning, it is bombastic. The one is pleasing, as an imperfection of growth; the other unpleasing, as that of decay. The talk of children is often quaint; that of worn-out men of the world often bombastic, where the error is not precluded by that of a perpetual sneer or a drivelling chatter.—*Blackwood's Magazine*, 1837.

ORIGIN OF "TOWN."

Tun, considered to have been the name of the Saxon homestead, has been erroneously thought to have signified originally a *town*; an error which is still repeated in our cyclopedias, and has to some extent been committed by the chroniclers in their account of the depopulation of the New Forest by William the Conqueror.—*J. Y. Akerman; Archæologia*, vol. xxxv. p. 97.

VESSEL UNDER WEIGH, OR WAY?

Does a ship on sailing get under "way," or under "weigh?" Webster and Falconer are in favour of *way*. The latter says:

"The *way* of a ship is the course or progress which she makes on the water under sail. Thus, when she begins her motion, she is said to be under way; and when that motion increases, she is said to have fresh way through the water; whereas to *weigh* (*lever l'ancre, appareiller*) is to heave up the anchor of a ship from the ground in order to prepare her for sailing."

AX FOR ASK.

This, like many other old words which are considered vulgarisms, is pure Saxon, and seems to be current as a provincialism in most parts of the kingdom. Nares cites several instances of its occurrence in our early writers; it is noticed by Jamieson, but appears to have escaped Todd.

Axe ze and it shall be zoven to zou.

Wicklif. Ms. Matt. vii.

And for my werke nothing will I *axe*.

Chaucer's M.D.'s Tale.

A poor lazar, upon a tide
Came to the gate, and *axed* meate.

Gower.

Margaret Countess of Richmond and Derby, in a letter to her son Henry VII., concludes with

As herty blessings as ye can *axe* of God.

Miss Baker's Northamptonshire Glossary.

DRUIDICAL CIRCLES.

Concerning the many Druidical stones to this day remaining in Great Britain the popular superstition prevails, that no two persons can number the stones alike, and that no person will ever find a second counting confirm the first. Dr. Southey, speaking of the Druidical stones near Keswick, says: "My children have often disappointed their natural inclination to believe this wonder by putting it to the test and disproving it."

The puerilities of antiquarian zeal we suspect to be often demolished by the powerful battery of science. Thus Professor Buckland smiles at the antiquaries' notions of the above Druidical stones, which have been stolen from the irregular surface-wells (pits in chalk, *puits naturels*) of the geologists.

THE STUDY OF ANTIQUITIES

is often denounced as puerile and unprofitable; and this is done not without some show of reason. The main error of our English antiquaries has arisen from their narrowing their views to particular points of research, and thus confounding the interest arising from singularity with the interest of history.

Mr. Hallam acutely observes, with respect to the minute details of the antiquary, that although "it is hard to say what may not supply matter for a reflecting mind, there is always some danger of losing sight of grand objects in historical disquisition by a too laborious research into trifles."—*Hist. Mid. Ages*, vol. iii. p. 303.

CURATIVE INFLUENCE OF CHANGE OF CLIMATE ON
CONSUMPTION.

This reliance has been considerably overstated, and in some instances altogether misplaced. Sir James Clark has assailed with considerable force the doctrine that a change of climate is beneficial to persons suffering from consumption; and a French physician, M. Carriere, has written strongly against it. Dr. Burgess, an eminent Scotch physician, also contends that climate has little or nothing to do with the cure of consumption, and that if it had the curative effects would be produced through the skin and not the lungs. That a warm climate is not in itself beneficial, he shows from the fact that the disease exists in all latitudes. In India and Africa, tropical climates, it is as frequent as in Europe and North America. At Malta, right in the heart of the genial Mediterranean, the army reports of England show that one-third of the deaths among the soldiers are from consumption. At Nice, a favourite resort of English invalids, especially those afflicted with lung complaints, there are more native persons die of consumption than in any English town of equal population. In Geneva the disease is almost equally prevalent. In Florence, pneumonia is said to be marked by a suffocating character, and by a rapid progress toward its last stage. Naples, whose climate is the theme of so much praise by travellers, shows in her hospitals a mortality by consumption equal to one in two and one-third; whereas in Paris, whose climate is so often pronounced villanous, the proportion is only one in three and one-quarter. In Madeira, no local disease is more common than consumption.

NOTE TO "THE BLACKNESS OF THE NEGRO," AT p. 4.

It is a common opinion, that climate alone is capable of producing all the diversities of complexion so remarkable in the human race. A very few facts may suffice to show that such cannot be the case. Thus the negroes of Van Diemen's Land, who are among the blackest people on earth, live in a climate as cold as that of Iceland; while the Indo-Chinese nations, who live in tropical Asia, are of a brown and olive complexion. It is remarked by Humboldt that the American tribes of the equinoctial region have no darker skin than the mountaineers of the temperate zone. So, also, the Puelches of the Magellanic plains, beyond the fifty-fifth degree of south latitude, are absolutely darker than Abipones, Tobas, and other tribes, who are many degrees nearer the equator. Again, the Charruas, who live south of the Rio de la Plata, are almost black; while the Guaycas, under the line, are among the fairest of the American tribes. Finally, not to multiply examples, those nations of the Caucasian race which have become inhabitants of the torrid zone in both hemispheres, although their descendants have been for centuries, and in Africa for many centuries, exposed to the most active influences of the climate, have never in a solitary instance exhibited the transformation from a Caucasian to a negro complexion.—*Types of Mankind*, 1856.

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